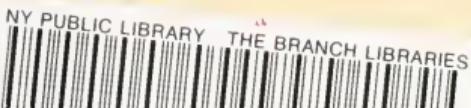


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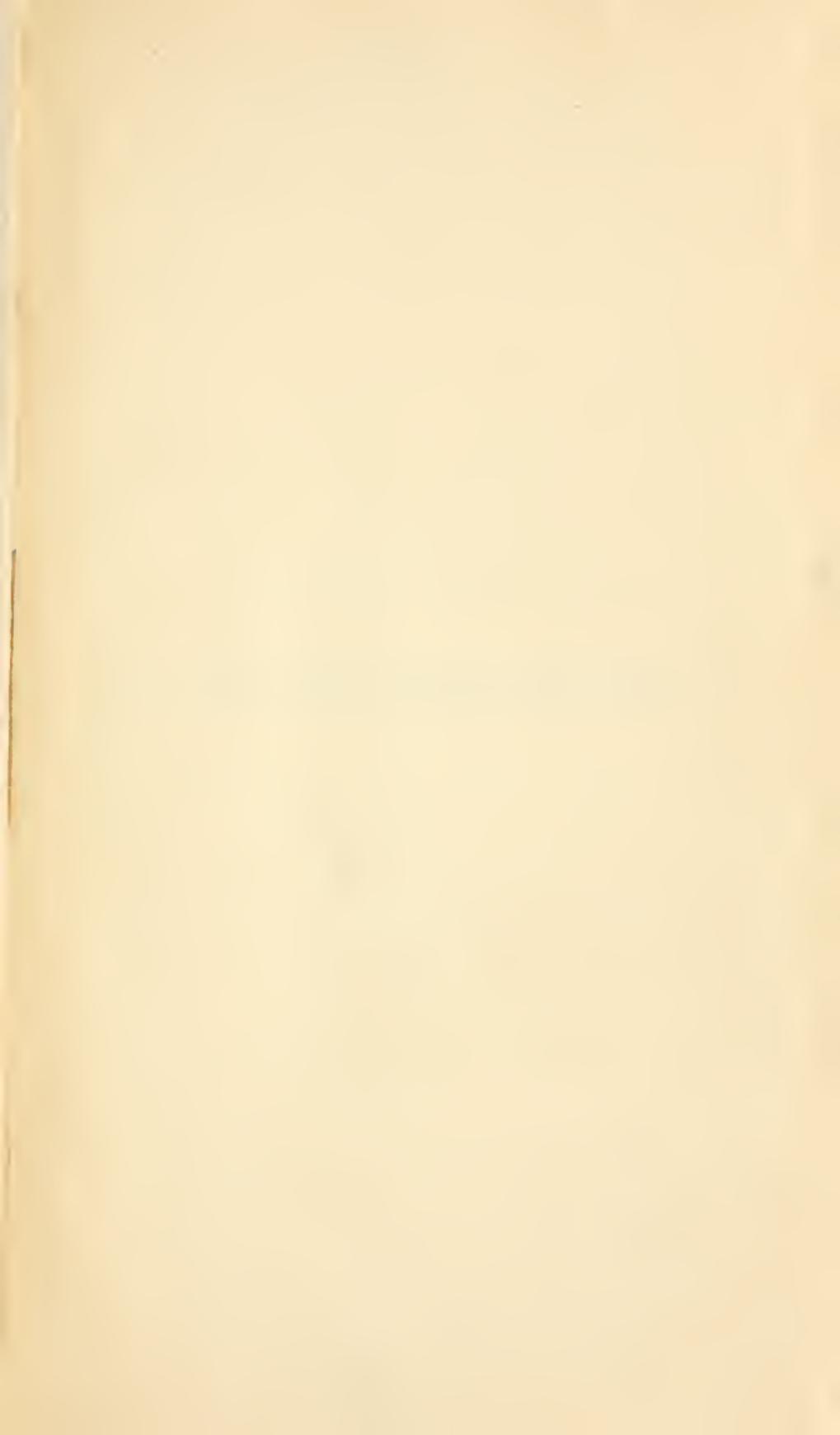
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IN THE DAYS OF SHAKESPEARE

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By TUDOR JENKS

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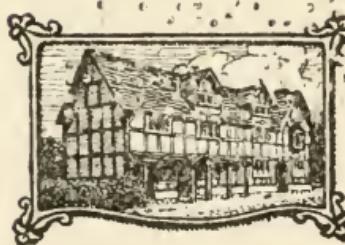


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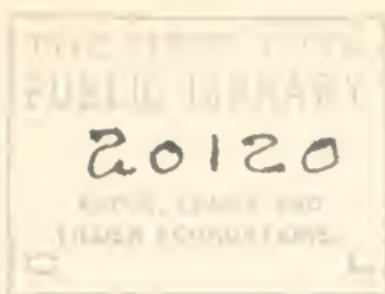
IN THE DAYS OF
Shakespeare

By
TUDOR JENKS

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NOTE

There are many aids to the study of poets and of their works in these days, and, in many cases, these aids are so intelligently prepared that they are, for their purpose, worthy of all praise. For the most part, however, these aids deal mainly, often exclusively, with matters presented by the text; with the exact meanings of the words, with references and allusions of all kinds, so that everything appears in clear light except the poet himself. Now the poet is the chief factor in his work, the determining factor. To know him is to bring to his work the secret of its power, of its charm, of its unique quality, whatever that may be. It must never be forgotten, moreover, that the end of all knowledge of books is to freshen and deepen

Note

the power to put the movement of life in them, and to enjoy the beauty which that stir of life takes on; in other words, to find joy in the art of the book. These are precisely the ends served by such a portraiture of a man and of his age as Mr. Jenks has made in his study of Chaucer. He has freshened our sense of the humanity of the poet, and he has so recovered the form and dress of a past age, that he has freshened our delight in his work. This series is to be extended to include similar books dealing with Shakespeare, Milton, Scott, and perhaps other writers, and can hardly fail to supplement in a very happy way the many admirable aids to the study of these writers.

HAMILTON WRIGHT MABIE,
*(From the introduction to "In the Days
of Chaucer.")*

PREFACE

It is not enough to know Shakespeare as the genius who created the greatest treasures of our literature. We should also realize that he was a boy in Stratford, a young man who went to seek his fortune in old London, an actor, playwright, manager, and man of affairs, who won a competence, enjoyed the friendship of the great Elizabethans, retired to the life of a country gentleman, and played his part in the everyday affairs of the time.

This book aims to present the poet as he was known to his friends and neighbors, to tell the story of his life and times, and to record the happenings that influenced him, but it does not adopt uncertain conjectures to fill the gaps in our knowledge.

Preface

The plan of this book does not include a detailed critical discussion of disputed questions, nor a critical commentary upon the plays except as they help us to know the times and the man, or the circumstances that affected his treatment of the themes he chose. The few plays to which more space is given are those oftenest read both by young students of Shakespeare, and by general readers.

As in the preceding volume on "Chaucer," a short bibliography is added, suggesting the best books for more minute study. There is also a chronological table of the poet's life.

TUDOR JENKS.

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CHAPTER I

WHO SHAKESPEARE WAS.

It is next to impossible for us to see Shakespeare apart from his writings. We may think of Chaucer, Spenser, Sidney, or Raleigh, as men of their times. We may separate them from the works of their pens, and consider them as men who lived among their fellows. We know enough of their surroundings, of their friends and foes, to conceive of them as in some sense like ourselves.

But of Shakespeare we know definitely next to nothing. We have no authentic estimate, record, or opinion of the man apart from the creations of his pen, the poems and the plays attached to his name. There are certain records to assure us that such a man lived in the days of Good Queen Bess. We can trace him from Stratford,

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the little farming hamlet where he was born, to London; fix the dates of a few of his appearances on the stage; name one or two men who seem to have known him as a business associate, make close guesses as to the times when the plays were written, acted, or published; retire with him again to his Warwickshire home, where we find him prosperous, able to buy estates, and then read on his tombstone that curious doggerel epitaph. That is all.

Baffling, discouraging, disappointing has been every quest for something nearer and more intimate. Affection awakened by the writer has been ever seeking some point of attachment to the man, and has by surmise put together a great mass of guesses, hopes, beliefs, interpretations. They are not proved facts, nor are they fictions. They are deductions which we may accept as more than probable, and yet the sceptical may well demand why they should be considered certainties. Into this controversy

Who Shakespeare Was

we do not mean to enter. We must know the received story of Shakespeare's life before judging whether it is worthy of our belief.

Appleton Morgan, who has figured as an authority on both sides of the question of Shakespeare's authorship, concludes a letter upon the subject, with these words: "Shakespeare is a miracle as he stands. But as he stands he is a much simpler and much less complicated miracle than he would be if any of the current explanations of him were accepted."

All this, it must be said, has nothing to do with the question of there being any secret cipher in the plays or elsewhere. That is purely a question of fact, and will one day be settled forever; it is a question that has really no direct bearing upon our reading of the plays or upon our learning the reputed life of William Shakespeare, the traditional author of those plays.

The whole purpose of referring to the

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controversy on the authorship is to remind the reader that it is possible the writing of the plays is one thing, and the life of the son of the Stratford farmer is another. This being so, they should be kept apart in the telling. To argue from the plays that the life of William Shakespeare must have been of one sort or another is to mislead the reader, and to keep him from knowing the truth.

We shall therefore first state briefly the proved facts about Shakespeare's life, and then, allowing ourselves some freedom of inference shall give as fully as is fair the traditional account of the man and the times in which he lived, so that it may be seen what influences were shaping him and perhaps enabling him to do the work with which he is credited.

In telling the life, we shall comment in a general way upon a few of the plays, avoiding what is to be found in most editions of the works, and emphasizing what

Who Shakespeare Was

is of most interest as touching the author.

Next to the Bible — a whole literature in itself — the speaker of the English tongue should find in the works of Shakespeare his greatest intellectual delight. He is, as Emerson tells us, “the man who carries the Saxon race in him by the inspiration which feeds him, and on whose thoughts the foremost people of the world are now for some ages to be nourished, and whose minds are to receive this and not another bias.” But even Emerson’s prose is too chilly when we seek phrases to apply to Shakespeare. We must go to a poet. Listen to Lowell’s lines.

“ Observe ; think ; morals draw ; part false from true.

He did all, long ago : and better too.

Go, seek of Thought some yet unsullied strand ;

His footprint there confronts you as you land.

What need for help on many words to call ?

When I say ‘ *Shakespeare*,’ I have said it all ! ”

And yet, while we are to retain all the delightful sense of approaching a genius,

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and the greatest genius of our race, if not of the world, we must not forget that this was also a man rather than a myth or a demigod. He lived not so many years ago, and in a land of which we can easily recreate for ourselves a vivid picture. His life covered certain definite years the events of which we know. His homes were in Stratford and in London, a village not unlike a hundred others of the time and a city whose history and traditions have been preserved for our delight.

Fortunately, the life of Shakespeare fell in the days of Good Queen Bess when England was great and respected, when her annals were kept with pride, when her sons were making her history known to the world. We know too much of the times to attempt a complete picture of them, and must be content to give general impressions leaving the reader's imagination or reading to supply the infinite detail.

Englishmen of Elizabeth's day saw their

Who Shakespeare Was

nation come to its maturity. They made highways through the waves to every region of the earth. They welcomed to their island the refugees from foreign tyranny and persecution, and received in return the germs of arts and manufactures that were to make their nation the richest and most powerful in the world. They transplanted to their own island the industries that had created prosperity abroad.

They sent abroad the colonists who learned how to make England a worldwide empire. They imported both literature and the fine arts, and learned that these might become native to their own land. They discovered the drama, fixed the principles of their religion, learned the worth of a navy, founded modern science, developed and perfected a language adequate to their needs and that of their descendants. In brief, they marked out the destiny of the English race.

Whether the times made the men or the

In the Days of Shakespeare

men created the times, this period had a galaxy of celebrities unequalled before or since, unless during the age of Pericles in Greece and during the Revolutionary period of our own country.

These were the days of Spenser, of Raleigh, Sidney, Marlowe, Ben Jonson; of Burleigh, Gresham, Walsingham; of Bacon, Gilbert, Hooker; of Drake, Frobisher, Davis, Howard, Grenville; and we know each of these to be worthy of a volume. In these times lived Mary Stuart, Henry of Navarre, the Duke of Alva, Catharine de' Medici. These years saw the Armada, the Massacre of Bartholomew, the Wars in the Netherlands, the rise of Puritanism.

But it is of little use to cite long lists of names. We may best understand the period by thinking of it as a time of breaking bonds, of revolution; when old standards had been discredited but were not yet overthrown; when men were learning the

Who Shakespeare Was

powers they possessed and resisting all attempts to restrict their use.

The English drama was the readiest means, almost the only means, by which the opinions of the people could find expression. The printing-presses were restricted; there were no newspapers or periodicals; freedom of speech was not yet tolerated. But upon the stage actors could give expression to sentiments and opinions through the personalities they enacted. They could caricature, could praise, could blame. The stage was not yet even hampered by respectability. Audiences expected license and applauded it, while the strait-laced could remain away. Writing for the stage was hackwork, and carried none of the responsibilities of literary authorship. To the dramatic writer, it was a task that brought him his bread; to the manager, it was a mere means of filling his theatre; to the public it was source of mere amusement.

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We have in our own day something similar in the brief dramatic sketches used by vaudeville performers. No one inquires as to their authorship, or questions whether they are literature. If they serve their ephemeral purpose all are satisfied. Such was the position of all dramatic composition in the England of Shakespeare's youth and boyhood; except for the greatness of the Elizabethan dramatists such it might have long remained.

Shakespeare and his contemporaries did so much to shape modern times that they seem to us more modern than they should. The days of Queen Bess had many ways of thought that would seem strange to us, but these ways were changed largely by the thoughts and labors of the great men of her time, and their works are less alien to us than were their times.

CHAPTER II

THE SHAKESPEARES OF STRATFORD-ON-AVON

In putting together a life of Shakespeare we arrive at results differing widely according to the method chosen. If the life be written by one who wishes to show how little we know of the author of the plays, it is easy to reject everything except a few juiceless records and doubtful traditions. If we adopt the other plan, opening our minds hospitably, and putting our suspicions aside, it is not hard to construct a series of charming romances.

There is, for either case, plenty of examples and the highest authority; and neither is very difficult in these days of libraries overflowing with books proving the love borne toward the supreme dramatist

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of modern times, the dramatist who has no rival unless Æschylus is entitled to be so called by virtue of his simplicity and directness; the poet who with Homer and Dante makes up the triad of supreme greatness in letters. Speculation about Homer is little rewarded, but with Dante and Shakespeare all may busy themselves to their heart's content, and books about them are so many that lifetimes may be spent in learning a part of their important contents.

Where there is so much, it is consoling to think that much must be unimportant; and it is well to bear this in mind from the beginning.

If we try to make a clear distinction between knowledge of Shakespeare's life and guesses at what the life may have been, we shall soon sift out the few proved facts upon which all agree, on which all may rely.

In direct connection with the man himself these certainties are too soon

The Shakespeares of Stratford-on-Avon

told, and they are disappointing enough.

1. The record of his baptism is dated April 26, 1564, and is satisfactory proof that he was born within a few days of that date in Stratford-on-Avon, of John Shakespeare and his wife Mary Arden.
2. He caused a bond to be given regarding a proposed marriage with Anne Hathaway, of Stratford (the names therein being Shags-pere and Hathwey), the bond being dated Nov. 28, 1582.
3. Susanna Shakespeare his daughter was baptized May 26, 1583.
4. Twins, Hamnet and Judith were baptized, February 2, 1585.
5. In 1587, he joined with John, his father, in a business arrangement to recover mortgaged property.
6. In 1592, there is a reference in a publication to a line from the Third Part of Henry VI.; and this reference shows that play to have been in existence, and its author to be a dramatist and actor of some note and success, envied by Greene, who wrote the pamphlet where the

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reference appears. We may accept Shakespeare as its author. 7. Then there are records of William Shakespeare as an actor, and writer of plays and poems, the first quarto-play with his name attached being "Love's Labor's Lost," "newly corrected and augmented by W. Shakespere," in 1598.

8. In 1597 he buys the "New Place" in Stratford; in 1598 he is mentioned by name as author of many of his plays; in 1602 he buys land at Stratford; in 1604 he sues for the price of some malt; in 1605 he buys the tithes; in 1607 there is a record of the burial of his brother; in 1608 he stands as sponsor for a child; in 1609 he sues another debtor; in 1613 he buys a house in London; in 1614 his name appears in regard to the enclosing of commons at Stratford; in 1616 his will is drawn, and in the same year (April 23, probably) he died.

That is a summary of all the *facts* for

The Shakespeares of Stratford-on-Avon

which proof can be given, all which cannot be disputed or set aside.

Of his handwriting we have only a few signatures, five in all, of which three are upon his will.

All beyond the facts above recited is either argument or tradition, to be accepted or rejected as it seems warranted or unsupported by the evidence. We cannot remain satisfied with these dry records, especially as the most interesting part of Shakespeare's life remains entirely untouched by them. As a dramatist we have nothing to attach to his name but the text of the plays published from time to time with his name on the title-page; there are no manuscripts, no corrected copies, no statements about his methods of composition, nothing to help us in reconstructing the life of the dramatist and poet, or to explain the apparent inconsistency between the works of William Shakespeare and the life of the Stratford citizen, no undoubt-

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ed record of his speech by a contemporary.

It is not strange that doubts have arisen as to the authorship of the plays; it is hardly to be wondered that Henry Hallam should say, "All that insatiable curiosity and unwearied diligence have hitherto detected about Shakespeare serves rather to disappoint and perplex us than to furnish the slightest illustration of his character."

. . . "No letter of his writing, no record of his conversation, no character of him drawn with any fullness by a contemporary has been produced."

But it will not do to ignore all the traditions and the sidelights helping us to know the man. Recognizing them as helps, not forgetting that they are uncertain, we must at least acquaint ourselves with them in the hope that each of us will find them helpful in satisfying our curiosity whether about the poet and dramatist or about the man.

As to his home it is to be remembered mainly that Stratford in Warwickshire was

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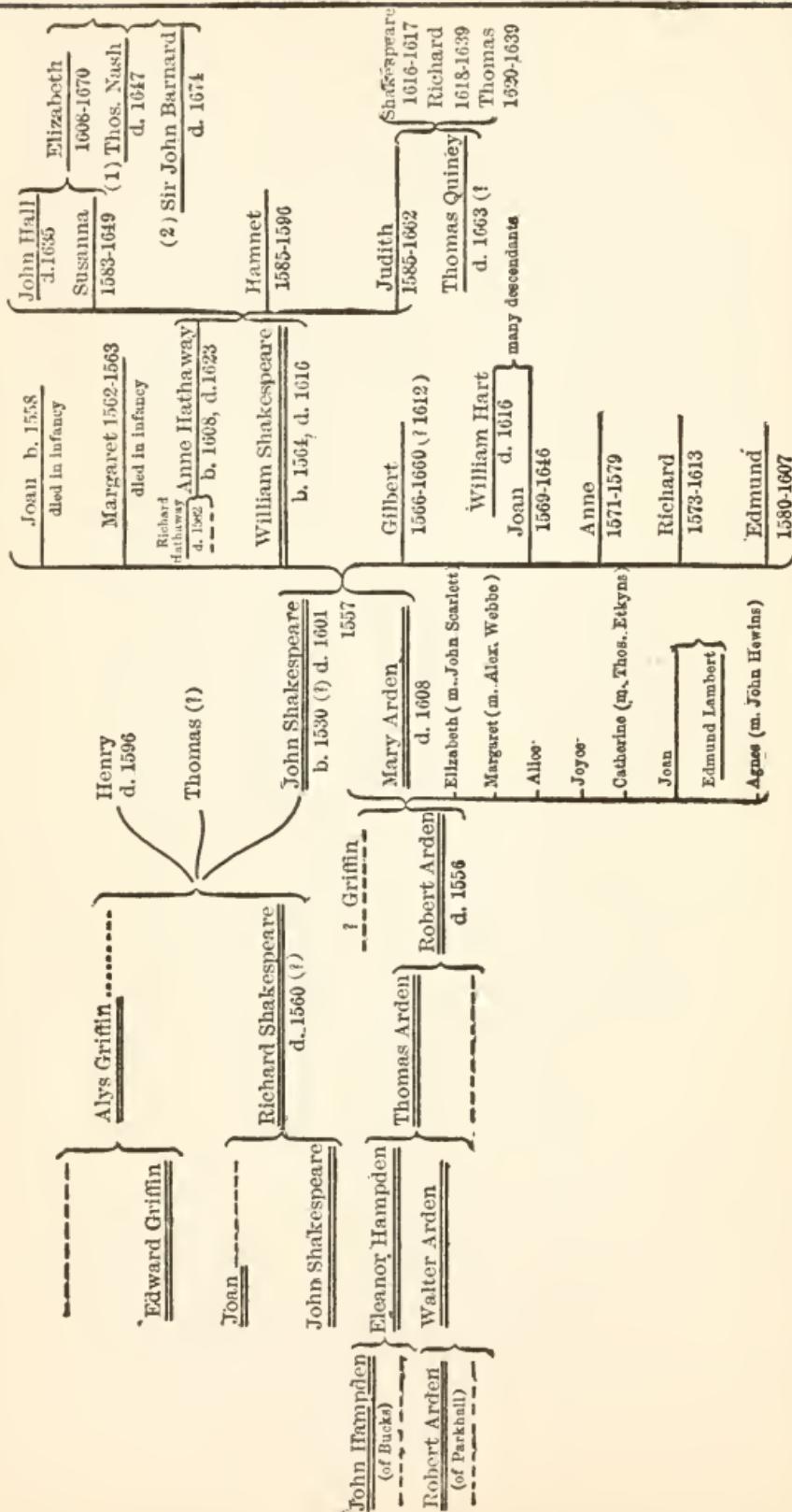
the very middle of England, the ancient Mercia, and not far from the crossing of great thoroughfares existing since the Romans ruled Britain. English history shows Warwickshire dominated by one race and another, Britons, Romans, Danes, Saxons, Angles; and its inhabitants were thus likely to possess the character coming from a variety of influences, and yet to end by being the most English of the English.

The ancestry of Shakespeare partook of all the more important strains uniting here. The name is not uncommon in the neighborhood, and probably his ancestors had been residents for several centuries.

The briefest method of exhibiting the family is by means of a chart, which is here given.

From this we see that William was third child and first son in the family of eight children born to John Shakespeare and his wife Mary Arden. The two oldest girls, Joan (first of the name) and Margaret,

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died in infancy, so William became virtually the oldest of the children, the next being Gilbert, born in 1566, two years later.

John, the father, came from Snitterfield, three or four miles from Stratford, where his father, Richard, was a tenant of Robert Arden, father of Mary whom John married; and where Henry, the poet's uncle lived. As to these Ardens we are told they were gentry, that is, people of some family and some property, probably connected with a John Arden, Esquire to Henry VII., whose coat-of-arms they used or claimed. The John and Joan Shakespeare in the chart are named in a register at Knoll in 1527, and are supposed from the Christian names to be the great-grandparents of William Shakespeare.

The Alys Griffin, wife of Richard, and grandmother of the poet, is said to be descended from Rhys ap Tudor, a Welsh prince of Powys, ancestor of certain Griffiths and Griffins, as appears in a genealogy

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published in London in 1896; but beyond the father and mother of the poet we are in regions of conjecture.

All of these people were of the respectable farmer-class; and upon coming to Stratford, about 1551, John Shakespeare was a man of some property, though the first notice we have of him is a record that he was fined twelve-pence for having a pile of unsavory rubbish before his house — and the records show also that the chief alderman was another offender.

Stratford at that time was of course without sewers, and was a damp, untidy town. The people were accustomed to throw all sorts of waste into the highways and ditches and had to be compelled to remove these rubbish heaps to common dumping-grounds by means of fines — and Shakespeare's father was fined for not doing this, a just penalty, says Halliwell-Phillips, since there was a public receptacle for rubbish not far away.

The Shakespeares of Stratford-on-Avon

Exactly what John Shakespeare did for a living we do not know, but tradition tells us he was a glover, and dealt besides in skins, wool, timber, and other merchandise. That he was a butcher also is asserted; but the probability is that, like other townsmen of his time, this indicates only that he was ready to turn an honest penny by dealing in whatever came to him as a part of his main business of working in leather.

Certainly he was respected by his townsmen, for we find him occupying a number of offices that prove this. He was "leet juror, ale-taster, constable, affeerior (fixer of fines), burgess, chamberlain, alderman," and at last, in 1568, became the High Bailiff, an officer corresponding to mayor of the town.

His marriage to Mary Arden, in 1557, brought him an inheritance she had recently taken under her father's will, a house, fifty acres of land, besides money, and we find him during his residence at Stratford be-

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coming the owner of a number of houses there.

But not long after the birth of his son William, probably at the traditional House in Henley street, there is evidence of a decline in the father's fortunes, and his affairs seem to go from bad to worse for a number of years, as will be seen later, though now we must return to the life that was led by the boy William, so far as surmise will supply the absence of all facts.

His home in early days was either the house in Henley Street or one like it — a small dwelling of two stories, with attic and cellar, built of timber and mortar. On the street was a main room with a great fireplace, which may have been his father's shop, and was certainly afterward used as a butcher's shop, and had an open stall before it where wares were displayed. Back of this main room was the living-room or kitchen with another open fireplace of commodious size. Up the narrow stairs

The Shakespeares of Stratford-on-Avon

one came to the bedrooms, low, rough plastered and small, but furnished with well-made furniture, and good store of all the necessaries of life. The walls may have been covered with painted cloths, exhibiting some parable, or (as Mr. and Mrs. Snowden Ward suggest in their delightful book on Stratford) with the "Seven Ages of Man," a very popular subject.

The life led by the poet's family was not unlike that of people in small farming towns of fifty years ago, or in our own colonial days. Ordinarily food was abundant, clothing was plentiful and warm if seldom renewed. Their table was set usually with wooden dishes, pewter being a rare luxury, and forks had not yet displaced fingers or made eating with the knife a vulgarity.

The streets of Stratford were only unpaved roadways, and the village was often traversed by flocks of sheep and herds of cattle coming to market, a fact of which

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the names Sheep street and Rother Market are reminders, “rother” being a Saxon word meaning cattle. But the busy market scenes were less interesting to the boys of Stratford than to their fathers; the boys of the town, like the boys of to-day, were principally interested in their home work, their school hours, and such shows, spectacles, or holiday merrymakings as came to their knowledge.

As to the home, the big fireplaces mean fire-wood, and it is the boys of a house who see the fires well supplied. When the floors had to be strewed with sand in summer, or with rushes in winter, there was another task for William the son of John Shakespeare and Mary Arden.

It is assumed that he attended the Grammar School in the town, where he was fairly certain to be well trained in elementary Latin and the ordinary English studies. The worth of these schools depended greatly upon the teacher who happened to be in

The Shakespeares of Stratford-on-Avon

charge, and it is known that men of real learning and ability were employed in Stratford and in schools of the same sort not far away, so we may credit the young Shakespeare with a fair opportunity for education during the years he gave to schooling. The old grammar-school room at Stratford with its high-peaked roof showing the massive supporting timbers, its broad, low windows once filled with latticed panes, the long desks and settles, looks not unlike a village church. In a corner just at the right hand of the master's desk tradition placed Shakespeare during his struggles with Lily's Grammar, Ovid and Virgil.

But if he began at the usual age, seven years, that is, in 1571, his schooldays did not last long; for it is thought he was removed from school and put to work in 1578, his boyhood coming abruptly to an end when he was fourteen because his father needed his help or his earnings.

During his pupilage there were three

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masters in the school,— from 1570-1572, Walter Roche, 1572-1577, Thomas Hunt, 1577-1578 Thomas Jenkins. All three were college-bred, and all became clergymen of some prominence. Hunt was the one who had Shakespeare longest under his charge, and he seems to have been a man of some ability. He became later Curate of Luddington.

During these seven school-years, however, Will Shakespeare may have come into contact with the influences that made him actor and dramatist. As soon as his father was chief alderman or High Bailiff, there began to be records of visits to Stratford of companies of actors, and from the time the boy was four years old to the time of his leaving school there are five records of payments to these troops of actors in the town. These strolling players coming on foot into the town with their wardrobes and properties on the back of a pack-horse or mule, were paid by the town authorities

The Shakespeares of Stratford-on-Avon

and gave their performances in the long Guild Hall, to which the people had free admission. The plays were simple, strong, and crudely acted.

In 1575, when Shakespeare was eleven, Queen Elizabeth made her memorable visit to Kenilworth Castle, thirteen miles from Stratford, where she was entertained so gorgeously; and the little Stratford boy was very likely to be there gazing in wonder at the marvels displayed. What they were we may read in Sir Walter Scott's "Kenilworth."

There were also on May-Day, Whitsuntide, and other holidays various festivals, processions, and pageants; while in every large town there were mysteries and miracle-plays, rudely but forcibly acted by men in elaborate costumes.

When there were no shows, the boys of Stratford were in no want of amusements; the beautiful country about them, with its woods, hills, and broad meadows, the little

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river that was at their very doors, and all the farm-life in the towns and villages near their home made the best of surroundings for small boys out of school. There seems little need to tell what they found to amuse them, since boy-nature to-day has not changed from boy-nature in the days of Elizabeth. They must have made traps and snares, hunted with bows and arrows, rowed in boats on the Avon, waded and gone in swimming.

William Shakespeare is said by a doubtful tradition to have been apprenticed to a butcher, and a story is handed down describing him as exercising this trade in grandiloquent style, slaying a calf with a theatrical speech; and it seems likely that he may have been intended to follow his father's career, and so may have been put to learn the trades that would be useful in the glovers' business. To slay and skin sheep and cattle, to tan and dress hides, to know the value and qualities of leathers,

The Shakespeares of Stratford-on-Avon

were naturally the things John Shakespeare would wish his son to learn. Other guesses assert that he spent some time as a teacher in the country or as clerk in a lawyer's office. The butcher-story comes from an antiquarian named John Aubrey ("undoubtedly honest, though careless," he is called by Halliwell-Phillips), who derived it from Stratford gossip. Aubrey was born ten years after Shakespeare's death. That the poet was a teacher comes from the same authority, and that he was for a time a lawyer's clerk was suggested by the editor Malone, and derives some support from a publication of 1589, Greene's *Menaphon*, there being therein an allusion to runaway apprentices who "leave the trade of *Noverint* [that is, law] whereto they were born . . . and will afford you whole *Hamlets*, I should say handfuls, of tragic speeches."

There are still other traditions, of about the same origin, going to show that Shakes-

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peare was leading at this period a varied and rather wild career. Some of these stories relate to drinking-bouts, and another, much better supported, relates to the notorious poaching incident.

This so-called deer-stealing must be more fully told, as it is supported by passages in two of the plays ascribed to Shakespeare, and is said to have been the immediate cause of his leaving Stratford and betaking himself to London.

But before relating the trouble with Sir Thomas Lucy, we may make note of the happenings that are recorded in the years from 1577 when he left school to 1586, the year of the deer-poaching, that is, from his thirteenth to his twenty-third year.

In 1578, John Shakespeare's prosperity seemed ended; he ceased to attend meetings of the town-council, and failed to pay assessments for the benefit of the poor and to buy weapons for the town militia. He mortgaged and sold lands, and was in debt.

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His troubles seemed to culminate in 1586, when he lost his place in the town-council, and was declared in a court proceeding to have no property that could be levied upon.

Some authors have believed that he was persecuted because he was a Roman Catholic, and that this explains his absence from the council meetings and from church. With the religious troubles Sir Thomas Lucy may have been concerned, for he was active in these matters, and in later years appears on a commission that reported John Shakespeare as one of those lax in church-going.

After leaving school we hear nothing of William Shakespeare until his marriage. Traditions state that he led rather a roistering irregular life, and allusion has been made to the stories of drinking-bouts in neighboring taverns; but these are not well supported.

Anne Hathaway, daughter of Richard Hathaway, lived in Shottery, west of Strat-

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ford. She was twenty-seven when Shakespeare married her in 1582, he being nineteen. No undoubted register exists recording the marriage, but two records at Worcester relate to it — the note of the issuing of a license, November 27, 1582, for a marriage between "Willielmum Shaxpere and Annam Whateley de Temple Grafton," and a bond, November 28, 1582, against any penalty incurred for marrying "William Shagspere and Anne Hathaway" with one publishing of the banns. The sureties in this bond were friends of Richard Hathaway, Anne's father. It seems over critical to doubt that the license and bond relate to the same couple; and it is suggested that the W. in Whateley came from misunderstanding the Latin ending *m* in Annam — which seems likely. Of this marriage there has been no end of discussion for the purpose of proving some previous ceremony, either a betrothal, a "handfasting," in those days often considered suf-

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ficient preliminary to living together, or a secret marriage by Roman Catholic rites, perhaps in some private house. If there was no such earlier ceremony, it seems that the marriage was made necessary by the expected birth of the daughter Susanna who was baptized May 26, 1583. In the year 1585 the twins, Hamnet and Judith were born, so within two years Shakespeare became a husband and the father of three children, though he was but twenty-one.

No doubt the young fellow found it hard to make a living, and there may have been something more pressing than love of sport to lead him in the ways of breaking the preserves and hunting the park deer.

In 1586, Shakespeare being 22, there was near Stratford a park, Charlecote, belonging to Sir Thomas Lucy. The Lucy family also had held other lands in the neighborhood, and among these was a tract of woodland known as Fulbroke Park.

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Fulbroke Park had in the reign of Queen Mary been granted to a Sir Francis Engelfield, a Romanist. He fled from England when Elizabeth came to the throne, leaving Fulbroke without a custodian; and the park was neglected, while its game ran wild. Naturally enough, the young men who were fond of hunting would not miss the opportunity.

Sir Thomas Lucy, the nearest landed proprietor, and a representative of the family that once owned Fulbroke, in caring for his own game-preserves would resent the hunting in Fulbroke. Since the two parks were separated only by a fordable river, it is not unlikely that the young hunters would pursue game into the Lucy property, and come into conflict with Lucy's game-keepers.

At all events, the belief is that Shakespeare was caught poaching, and was whipped and otherwise so severely punished by Sir Thomas that he responded by writ-

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ing abusive verses; but finally was persecuted into leaving Stratford.

Another reason is suggested for ill-will between the magistrate and the young man. Lucy was a bigoted Puritan; the Ardens were Romanists. One of the Ardens — a son-in-law of Edward Arden — had in 1583 made a plot to kill Queen Elizabeth, and upon its discovery had committed suicide. The father-in-law and the family priest had been convicted and punished for the crime, not long before the trouble about the deer. If religious differences inspired the harshness of the magistrate, the whole happening is easily understood, but we have no proof of this.

This story is told first in print by Rowe, author of the earliest life of Shakespeare; but it is confirmed by old documents, by the allusions to the incident in the plays, and by oral tradition. The first stanza of the verses written by Shakespeare to ridicule Lucy was found preserved by a “very aged

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gentleman living in the neighborhood of Stratford.” Here it is:

“A parlemente member, a justice of the peace,
At home a poor scare-crowe, at London an asse ;
If lowsie is Lucy as some folk miscall it,
Then Lucy is lowsie, whatever befall it :

He thinks himself greate,

Yet an ass in his state

We allowe by his ears but with asses to mate,
If Lucy is lowsie, as some folk miscalle it,
Sing lowsie Lucy, whatever befall it.”

Shakespeare’s greatest devotee might be defied to show the hand of genius in these lines; but sung by a band of mischievous village boys, they might serve the purpose of angering a country magistrate.

CHAPTER III

SHAKESPEARE GOES TO LONDON

It was, it is thought, in 1586 or 1587 that the young man Shakespeare made his way from Stratford to London, probably on foot and by the route including Oxford and High Wycombe, according to Sidney Lee and the authorities he cites, one of his resting-places being the Crown Inn near Carfax, at Oxford, if the tradition be accepted. Tradition also is our only guide in deciding upon the nature of his early work in London, and the story is that he took care of the horses of visitors to the theatre. There were then two London playhouses, the earlier known as "The Theatre," the other as "The Curtain." The first of these was owned by James Burbage who kept a livery stable at Smithfield, so, if the story be true, this seems the like-

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lier place of Shakespeare's first employment. Besides, this Burbage may have come from the neighborhood of Stratford.

What brought the young Stratford adventurer to the theatre?

Possibly he had made acquaintance with some of the players during their visits to his native town. The records show that the companies were there often during Shakespeare's boyhood, one visit happening in 1587, which may have been the turning point in the dramatist's career. Such a mind must have been powerfully attracted to the stage, and once the idea of going to London had been adopted it seems natural that the actors would have been the first to whom the young countryman would apply upon finding himself in the city, the centre of England—the England of good Queen Bess and the Renaissance.

What a life it was upon which the young man from Warwickshire had entered! One is perplexed to know what to touch upon

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first—whether upon the new birth of faith, the freedom of thought that had been won by Henry VIII., fostered under Edward VI., threatened by Bloody Mary, and was now to come to full maturity under Elizabeth—or upon the widening of the world's horizon by the great navigators, Drake, Frobisher, Gilbert, Willoughby, and by the writings of Vespucci, Maffei, Mendoza, and the labors of Hakluyt. Politically England was standing almost alone against Europe, claiming and about to win the empire of the seas. In literature, Edmund Spenser had almost completed the “Faërie Queene,” which was to voice the highest ideals of the age, while the drama, springing from the people, was to express all their life, from highest to lowest, was to find in Greene, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, interpreters in full sympathy with the times, and capable of finding forms for every thought and fancy, every belief and prejudice.

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Printing was not yet so universal as to make books common, and a library of 3,000 volumes owned by a private person was considered a wonder. Classic literature was open to scholars, and translations came rapidly from the presses, each bringing to English readers knowledge of some little known master. Italy, France, Spain were being explored for materials to be brought out by English printers or publishers, for it was the day of literature.

The day of the warriors and statesmen who had made England safe at home and respected abroad was passing, and the English, once the Armada had been turned back and wrecked, felt free to give themselves to their own delight and development.

According to each man's taste he gave himself up to the pursuits of philosophy, science, or creative literature, if he were learned, or to building, gardening, foreign travel, literature in the form of reading, or

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attending the drama, if he were not capable of creative work.

Commerce and business flourished in security; London, the centre of trade, was thronged with merchants, tradesmen, apprentices,—with sailors, travelers, foreigners all eager to partake in her prosperity.

Yet there were not wanting disturbers of the kingdom's tranquillity. An occasional plot now and then came to light to remind England that she yet had foes abroad and at home, and by its suppression to reassure her people of the Queen's firm hold upon their loyalty, and of the government's ability to sustain itself despite all attacks.

Free of anxiety about great matters, an infinitude of trifles engaged men's minds. They took interest in speculations that would not have claimed attention for a moment if greater matters had been in discussion. They found pleasure in mere words, in the verbal oddities and fancies of affected authors. They listened eagerly

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to tales of travelers, fables of poets, dreams of philosophers, the fine-spun quiddities of law and theology. The English people, in short, may be thought of as "new rich." Able for the first time to stand alone, to support themselves without too great labor, having at command ample resources, they were high-spirited, eager for enjoyment, ready to try each new thing that was offered them.

They imitated the virtues and vices of their neighbors; the pride and gallantry of the Spaniard, the learning and subtlety of the Italian, the courtesy and formality of the French, the pluck and coolness of the Dutch, all found response in the docility of the English of Elizabeth's reign. Not yet was there a stereotyped English character, a model whereon to shape the typical Englishman as we see him later.

In times like these, the drama was sure to flourish. It had no dangerous rival. Book literature had not entered the same

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field. The novel of incident, of character, of adventure, did not exist. Poetry still, in spite of Chaucer's example, maintained a height far above the reach of the people. The learned wrote for the learned. If one was to read at all widely, Latin, French and Italian must be acquired. Even the women who were well taught learned these languages. Literature was for the study of scholars, for the lamp and the closet; it made no part of everyday life.

Only in the drama was there an approach to the great public. Only in the theatre was there the possibility of speaking at once to high and to low—to men of the Court and men of the street. The actor alone could speak with full assurance of appreciation, whether he delivered tragic sentiments in the person of a king, or voiced the drolleries of a clown or the rude jests of a peasant.

Two forms of spectacle had become merged in one. The old mysteries or miracle-plays represented one type, the ancient

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revels and pageants the other. The drama of teaching and the drama of amusing had gradually approached, and at last coalesced. In the religious mysteries there had been characters that had grown from grotesqueness to clowning; while in the pageants were symbolic figures that gradually acquired dignity and presence. The Elizabethan drama, descended from both lines, partook of them both, and found no sentiment too high, no absurdity too low for its scope.

The audience came to the theatre without prejudices. The dramatist had only to furnish entertainment, either high or low. The pit would laugh at and applaud his coarsest jokes; the wits and gallants gave quick appreciation to his loftiest flights, his quaintest plays of fancy. The stage in England was bound by no traditions strong enough to hamper the playwright, and so long as audiences were pleased the managers were satisfied.

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The makers of plays had hardly begun to claim place among literary men. They were not considered as entitled to the dignity of authorship or bound by its responsibilities. Plays were almost common property. They were translated, adapted, revised, lengthened or cut down, to suit the whims of managers, actors, or the public. Many were the product of hack-writers. Two or three men would work together, each doing what he could do best, or a single writer would sell his drama outright, to be used as the buyer saw fit.

Whatever would make a play more profitable or better adapted to its theatrical use was done without scruple. Dances, songs, pageants, dumb-shows, were inserted at will or omitted at pleasure. Just how much or how little scenery was used we cannot tell. We know only that Elizabethan audiences were easily satisfied. Where properties and scenery were lacking, much could be left to the imagination.

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Where stage-devices were available, there is no doubt they were used. Even the old mysteries, as we know from pictures, were at times helped out by elaborate devices—a favorite being the great mechanical flaming mouth that swallowed up lost souls. At the same time, from Sidney's "Defense of Poesy" we learn that two or three soldiers did duty for an army, and from Shakespeare's prologues we know how much make-believe entered into his greatest dramas, and that his audiences expected little scenic aid.

The actor's position was a curious one. It was a contradiction. He was both honored and despised. Without the license of some noble, he could act only in fear of prosecution by law, and yet, once licensed, he might gain the approbation of the highest in the land.

His profession was looked down upon, while he himself might be popular among all classes. He might make the acquaint-

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ance of noblemen, and yet was by law known only as his lordship's servant, dependent for a livelihood upon his master's good-will.

The playwright shared in the actor's low station, and yet had no part in his public triumph. He was a necessity, but entirely dependent upon manager and actors. They profited by his labors, but had little respect for him or for them except as success before the public gave him power. Greene, writer of prose and verse, and maker of popular plays starved to death, owing to charity the poor shelter that covered him. Marlowe, co-worker with Shakespeare, and in some respects his teacher and inspirer, died in obscurity after a brawl resulting in the death of one of his boon-companions.

It was no envied career that Shakespeare was to enter, and it is through his business talents that he was able to win wealth and success by his dramas. How he began is unimportant except as a matter of curiosity.

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Whether he began by caring for horses at the door of the theatre, or was first employed as call-boy and prompter's assistant, it is not doubted that he soon won his way to the stage, and was enrolled regularly in the licensed company.

Which company he joined is not certainly known, as the first record is dated December, 1594, and shows him one of the "Lord Chamberlain's Players." If he had been with this company from the first, we can trace in the annals of the band of actors, something of his history. Before 1588 these same actors had been known as the Earl of Leicester's company, and in that year became "Lord Strange's men," then by his change of title the "Earl of Derby's" and on his death, "The Lord Chamberlain's Players." Members of the same company were Richard Burbage, Heming, Condell, and Phillips.

Burbage's father was the builder of "The Theatre," outside London's boun-

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daries, and here Shakespeare may first have found employment; but in 1592 his company appeared at Henslowe's new theatre, "The Rose," at Southwark, and here, according to Sidney Lee, was the scene of Shakespeare's early successes, though he also appeared in both the other houses, until Richard Burbage and his brother built "The Globe," in 1599. During these early years it is stated by one of the first editors that he lived in Southwark not far from the Bear Garden; though the records of St. Helen's Church, Bishopsgate, show that some "William Shakespeare" lived in that parish in Elizabeth's time. From the absence of all evidence of more active life it may be believed that he busied himself exclusively with his theatrical work, both as playwright and as actor.

There are so few traditions in regard to his life in London that it is hardly worth while to record them here; since they are but idle tales and have no relation to his life

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as actor, maker of plays, and manager. Of his appearances upon the stage there are only the vaguest traces. We have his name recorded among those of his company. We have the hazy recollection of his brother Gilbert, who in old age stated that he had seen his brother enact the part of an old man, possibly the part "Adam" in "As You Like It"; the statement of Shakespeare's first biographer, Rowe, that he played the "Ghost" in Hamlet, which was "the top of his performances"; and nothing more definite, unless it be the remark of Chettle, a contemporary, that Shakespeare was "excellent in the quality he professes."

All this argues little in favor of any prominence as an actor, since even Chettle was making an apology, and trying to be complimentary, and would surely have said more if he could. Here, again, as soon as we seek beyond the dramatist's works, we find nothing upon which to found an argument of greatness or genius.

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During these early years of Shakespeare's London life, we find but one trace of connection with Stratford. He seems to have joined with his father in an attempt to release certain lands from a mortgage and convey them for cash to John Lambert; but this is no proof of a visit to the town. A tradition states that after 1596 the poet visited the town once a year, but this lacks confirmation; and it is even possible he was absent for eleven years, without seeing his wife and three children.

Meanwhile, the fortunes of his father were continually growing worse, as the town-records show. We see him gradually losing his offices, sued for debt, remaining away from meetings and from church, even arrested, and released on *habeas corpus*. There is no gleam of prosperity in the family so long as William is in London. Of the wife and children there is no account whatever, though there is a later mention of a sum of money borrowed, and unpaid,

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which must have been lent Mrs. Anne Shakespeare during her husband's absence, by her father's shepherd, Thomas Whittingham. If these facts were known of a man whom we hated, we should say they showed him a heartless fellow. In Shakespeare's case we take refuge in our ignorance, and in the hope that there may be some excuse for his apparent neglect of his own family, his wife and his children. Yet it is difficult to imagine what reason there could be for his remaining away, and for his return in later years and faithful attachment to his native town.

It is hardly to be hoped that the mysteries in Shakespeare's life will be solved. There have been so many eager searchers after every scrap of information, and there has been so little brought to light during the years of seeking that the most sanguine can hardly be hopeful of any discovery of great moment.

Fortunately, it is only our curiosity that

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is baffled. We have his poems and plays, whereas in the case of the great Greek Dramatists we have not only little information concerning their lives, but we possess only a small part of the works whereon their fame is based, and what we have justifies the regret for the rest.

CHAPTER IV

THE THEATRES AND ACTORS

Before James Burbage, who began life as a carpenter, built "The Theatre" especially for plays, the actors gave their performances in tents, under wooden sheds, or in the court-yards of inns. The arrangements were of the simplest kind in all three places. All that was needed was a place for the audience, a platform for the players, and some retiring room from which actors could make entry. It was usual also to have a second upper platform or gallery above the stage, and this served whenever the action required another level —whether as a balcony in "Romeo and Juliet," the lurking place of a villain, or the windows of a palace. The inns, built ordinarily around an open court, were excellent for the actor's purposes, since the ground

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find no fault, but a reference to burning the corpse would hardly have been understood. Goethe said, "Shakespeare turns his Romans into Englishmen; and he does right, for otherwise his audience would not have understood him."

The women characters in all of the plays of the time were acted by young men or boys, and there were few women in the audience at any time. Sometimes great ladies would come masked, and some of the hucksters who sold fruit and flowers were girls, but the theatre was hardly a fit place for reputable women save on special occasions, though they witnessed the private performances of plays. This will help us to excuse some of the coarseness of the dramas, and diminish our wonder that the loose talk in the comedies could be tolerated. It was pot-house humor for a pot-house crowd, and those to whom it was objectionable had only to remain away. Before and after the play, as during any intermissions, there

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was eating, drinking, rude jesting, occasional squabbling and worse; and this was only stilled when the actor who was to speak the Prologue parted the curtains and advanced to the front of the stage in his long black velvet cloak.

The Prologue was often apologetic, and begged for kind attention, assuring the audience that the actors would do their best to please. The Epilogue, spoken often by the same actor, or by one of the principal characters, was also in the subservient vein. Even that to "The Tempest," possibly Shakespeare's last play, is as humble as any,

"—Release me from my bands
With the help of your good hands :
Gentle breath of yours my sails
Must fill, or else my project fails,
Which was to please. . . .
As you from crimes would pardoned be,
Let your indulgence set me free."

The Prologues were not always published with the plays, and it is likely some of them have been lost; possibly there were

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general forms used over and over again.

The Epilogues, being spoken by characters in person were also a part of the plays and have been oftener preserved,

These introductions and concluding speeches are a legacy from the Mysteries and Moralities, where it was necessary to explain and to display the lessons taught by the acting, but in the hands of the great Elizabethan dramatists, the prologue and epilogue was soon found to be unnecessary, the same purpose being better served by the introductory and concluding speeches of the actors themselves. Thus in the plays of real life, rather than romances like "The Tempest," we shall find the Prologue replaced by a soliloquy giving the audience an idea of the proposed action, and the Epilogue made unnecessary by a moralizing summary, as in Gloucester's sarcastic words at the beginning of "Richard III." and Richmond's speech at the end of the same play. In the great tragedies, where speech

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would jar as an impertinence, the conclusion is often marked by the solemn sound of music, or as in "Hamlet" by the booming of ordnance.

In short, the history of the drama repeats that of other arts. It begins in imitation, glides into conventional forms, modifies those conventions to suit its varying purposes, and then divides into two sorts, the classical and the realistic. In Shakespeare's day the drama retained many of its old conventions but was learning to free itself from fetters that hampered its range.

The characters, like the plays themselves, were to a certain extent those of tradition. The Fools or Clowns were favorites with the public and could not well be omitted. Shakespeare has them in all kinds, from the regular jester in motley to the unconscious fool of quality and pretense like Malvolio; from the shrewd clowns like the Gravediggers in "Hamlet" and the Porter in "Macbeth" to the delightful Autolycus

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and the most pathetic Fool of “King Lear,”—whom some critics suspect to have been “Cordelia” in disguise.

The old man, the mistress and lover, the hero’s friend, the villain, the old woman, are other conventional characters that will occur to all familiar with the drama. Shakespeare, writing primarily for the stage, is careful to keep within its rules, and shows his power by making conventional forms yield to his purposes.

But this will appear more fully in considering the work done by the dramatist for the benefit of those among whom he had cast his lot. To such a playhouse and to such a stage came the young Warwickshire yeoman, to find himself associated with some of the brightest men of the greatest time of England. Whether he began as horse-boy or prompter we know that he made his way to the stage, and was soon credited with the reputation of a “Johannes Factotum” as Greene calls him, a “regular

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Jack of All Trades," as we should phrase it. It was in 1592 that Robert Greene starving in a garret wrote his "Groat's-worth of Wit," and caricatured a line of Shakespeare's, at the same time calling the young dramatist by the name "Shakescene," in which compound "scene" bears the old meaning "stage," rather than the modern meaning "scenery."

It will be best to quote again the well-known passage:

"There is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that, with his *Tygres heart wrapt in a players hyde*, supposes hee is as well able to bombast out a blanke-verse as the best of you; and beeing an absolute Iohannes fac-totum, is, in his owne conceyte, the only SHAKE-SCENE in a countrey. . . . Let these apes imitate your past excellence, and never more acqueynt them with your admyred inventions."

The line italicized in the extract is found in the "Third Part of Henry VI.," Act. I., Scene 4, line 137, if "player's" be changed to "woman's," but the line is from the older play upon which "Henry VI." is

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based. It is plain from this savage attack by Greene that he looked upon Shakespeare as gaining reputation at the expense of older dramatists such as himself, Marlowe, Lodge, or Nash, and Peele, but whether the name Shake-scene is aimed at the playwright or the actor is uncertain. We learn from the happening that Shakespear was in 1592 busy in making plays, no doubt in rewriting and adapting the work of others, and that at least one playwright resented the actor's intrusion into dramatic writing. This attack seems to have offended Marlowe and Shakespeare, and Henry Chettle having had some hand in it, made an apology and spoke thus of Shakespeare: "Myself have seen his demeanor no less civil than he excellent in the quality he professes; besides, divers of worship [people of quality] have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing that approves his art."

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Greene's pamphlet shows that "Henry VI." had been completed in some form before 1592, and that Shakespeare had a hand in the work. It is believed by special students of the plays that the earliest of his plays were written in collaboration, and probably with Marlowe. The earliest may have been that horrid tragedy, "Titus Andronicus," though no editor is willing to hold even the 'prentice hand of Shakespeare responsible for all of its crude and revolting details. It is put with his works because it was mentioned as his in the list given in Meres' "Treasury of Wit" (1598), and it was included in the First Folio, 1623.

The Shakespearean version was acted by his own and other companies, and was printed in Quarto editions in 1600 and 1611, neither naming Shakespeare as author. We may be helped in understanding how such a grawsome medley of horrors could be liked by audiences of the time if we remember that in those days it was con-

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sidered amusing to attend bear-baiting and bull-baiting—bloody fights between fierce dogs and infuriated beasts. We can hardly endure even to read “*Titus Andronicus*,” and only its ascription to Shakespeare’s hand has kept the clumsy tragedy from deserved oblivion. That he may have touched it up is possible. That it shows marked signs of his genius no few have dared claim.

If there is strength in the drama, it is to be sought in the characters “Aaron,” the devilish Moor, and “Tamora,” Queen of the Goths. The others are mere puppets, with the possible exception of “*Titus*” in one or two scenes.

The distinguishing peculiarity of this play above all the rest is its parade of classical learning. It reads like the work of a young collegian stuffed full of lore from Latin and Greek authors, and refers to passages that had not yet been translated—notably an incident from a play of Sopho-

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cles. Everywhere the dead languages are lugged in by the heels.

The chief interest in this play will be found if it be contrasted with what the Elizabethan drama became within a few years in the hands of Shakespeare and the greater dramatists of the time. It also gives us an idea of how little nicety of finish was demanded by the audiences of "The Theatre" and "The Curtain" as they came out of bustling London to the open fields and thronged these two play-houses near Holywell in Shoreditch.

CHAPTER V

HIS EARLIEST WORK FOR THE STAGE

The play "Titus Andronicus" may be considered a fair specimen of the blood-thirsty tragedies that were popular with the audiences of London when Shakespeare began the revising of such crude material. No one can tell how much or how little revision was done to these old plays. Probably Shakespeare himself could do no more than point to a few passages as undoubtedly his own. His work was done to suit the needs of the theatre, no doubt done at times under pressure, and very likely under practical orders. He would be told to lengthen this scene, cut out that dialogue, shorten certain speeches and omit others.

There is no doubt that these plays represent the work of many men; that young men in need of money and with a taste for writ-

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ing worked for the theatres then as they work for the periodical press now, with little interest beyond the money the writing brought them. Francis Bacon was very likely to have been one of these. We know that he prepared masques and pageants and revels for Gray's Inn festivities; we know he was long a barrister in need of money and with little practice. No doubt he did what so many men of his time are known to have done, used his pen to earn money from theatrical managers. What is his, what is Shakespeare's, what was written by this or that young author, can not now be separated from the plays of the time.

The plays were not ordinarily printed, but were kept in the theatre in manuscript, sometimes in complete form, but often in the "parts" that were to be learned by each actor.

But while we may reject this crude tragedy, we must accept "The First Part of Henry VI.," as being partly his work,

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on the authority of the dying Greene's quotation from that play.

The belief of scholars is that Shakespeare's pen in this play also was mainly that of a reviser, or that he wrote only passages here and there. There is much minute discussion of what is due to each of the three or four hands engaged upon this play and its two companions ("The Second and Third Parts of Henry VI."), but for the purposes of the general reader it is enough to be directed to such portions as may be thought most characteristic of Shakespeare.

Anyone used to reading Shakespeare's plays will be inclined to see his style first in the scene where the great nobles are plucking from the bushes of Temple Garden the red or white roses that are to be the badges of their factions — Act. II., Scene IV. And yet it is not so strong as to be beyond the power of certain other dramatists of the time or earlier. The scene between young Plantagenet and Mortimer is also

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thought to be Shakespeare's; and now and then, in a word or phrase,—as, “Here dies the dusky torch of Mortimer,” we are led to wonder if the inspired pen is not at work.

But though the workmanship is less skillful than we should expect even in an early drama, the scenes toward the end of Act IV., in which the brave Talbot and his son fight to the death against overwhelming odds have more of the Shakespearean life and spirit than any in the play, and would, I think, bear insertion in his later dramas better than any of these credited to him.

One more scene, that between Suffolk and Margaret, is by some ascribed to Shakespeare, but it leaves the reader as unmoved as if the two were marionettes; and if it be from his hand it is the merest hack-writing turned out as part of the daily grist from the hired author of the players. In short, while the play is far from dull, and will well repay a reading, it could be lost

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without regret if it did not belong in the chain of historical plays. The picture of Joan of Arc as a vicious impostor can never be grateful to the modern mind that knows the beauties of her character and the pathos of her martyrdom. The only figures that remain in the mind are those of the Talbots, and possibly of old Mortimer, and even these are within the power of other writers.

Before speaking of the succeeding parts of "Henry VI.," we may follow the order given by Dowden, and consider the Early Comedies which all ascribe to Shakespeare. The first of these is "Love's Labor's Lost," which, without any convincing evidence, is thought to have been written about 1590, when the author was twenty-six.

As regards the life of the time, this comedy has importance chiefly as a satire upon "Euphuism" and as indicating the beginning of the Romantic drama in England the departure from the old classical and formal

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style. Of Euphuism, Sir Walter Scott has given us a lifelike sketch in his "Monastery." In the Sir Percie Shafton of that novel, with his verbal quiddities and formal gallantries, his "preciosities" of phrase and deportment, Scott has drawn for us an Elizabethan courtier who modeled himself upon the standard given by John Lyly's romance "Euphues." Fantastic word-plays were brought into fashion by Lyly, and Shakespeare's comedies abound in them. Scott says in his introduction to the "Monastery" that "the Euphuist was condemned as unnatural and absurd," and asserts that even Shakespeare's Euphuists do not amuse us as they amused his audiences, giving as a reason that the follies of fashion pass and are forgotten.

It is certain that "Love's Labor's Lost" belongs among the earliest of the author's works.

The main reasons for dating it so early are its style, which Coleridge thinks charac-

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teristic of a youthful poet who "begins by generalizing and condensing, ends in realizing and expanding"; and the events treated. The characters are taken from France during the civil war of 1589-1594; the Russian masquerade is modeled on the reception by Elizabeth of Russian ambassadors in 1574; and the fantastical follies caricatured are of about the same time.

The plot is original, almost the only instance where Shakespeare's main incidents are not borrowed; and the characters are not conventional, but seem drawn from the life about him. Humor of the true Shakespeare variety here is dawning and lightens all the play. With this comedy we begin to consider why this dramatist is to us a being different and apart from all the rest, why we come nearer to him than to any other, and yet find him the most unapproachable of all.

The reader of Shakespeare must enter upon the consideration of his plays in the

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spirit of a theatre-goer. The plays should be first read as they were written, with a keen sense of the action and life of the stage, each actor's speech as modified by the presence of others, as interpreted by their reception of it. Only in this way can we rightly prepare ourselves to study the details intelligently as parts of the whole effect.

Thus, in this comedy, the underlying idea of withdrawing from the world for study and contemplation was one familiar to the society of the time, both in England and on the Continent. The references to French politics point to the Huguenot struggle for the French crown of which the English public heard more or less, since England was then in alliance with the French Protestants. Similar timely use of current incidents and fashionable fancies will be found in notes to the play, showing an acquaintance with all that was then current gossip among the London wits and gallants, and

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proving Shakespeare's ready use of every means to interest his audiences.

But only when compared with the work of other writers of the time do we appreciate the powers that are coming to make great the English stage. Already we shall recognize the young dramatist's great qualities and the personal traits of the man even in this early play. Contrasting its lightest was its most serious parts, how vast the range! From the cheap puns of the boy Moth to the straightforwardness and "sweet and tempered gravity" of the conclusion (to quote Coleridge) is room for all talent, even for genius, if not too deeply moved. The characters are hints of those we are to meet later, though only Biron is a true and rounded creation. The general motive of the play is to show affectation and pretense overcome by simple truth.

To the same time belongs the "Comedy of Errors," based on the plot of Plautus. In brief it is the farce of mistaken identity,

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but where the Latin original dealt with one pair, Shakespeare introduces two, and keeps them all in action as a juggler might toss oranges or daggers in the air. Shakespeare, too, makes for us characters who seem impelled by their own motives. Charlotte Porter and Helen A. Clarke in their "First Folio Edition" of this play have most ably brought out the points in which Plautus has been improved upon by the English author, the characters, especially, having been "so transmuted by Shakespeare's human touch that he has made loveable what in Plautus simply reflects a coarse and low plane of human development." Most notable is the steady succession of entanglements with the increasing perplexities of the play personages and the audience alike. It is in this respect that the "Comedy of Errors" shows improvement over "Love's Labor's Lost"; the words of the actors are becoming subordinate to their actions and to growth of the plot. This is

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more evident when the play is seen upon the stage than when it is read; acted, the comicalities of misunderstanding are clear and unceasing, winning from its audiences an ever-varying tide of mirth, gentle or uproarious, rising and falling under the magic of the dramatist's art. And yet, as in "Love's Labor's Lost," there is more than mere fun and foolery, more even than poetical conceits or play-writing. There is a foundation in human feeling and natural truth exhibited in each personage of the play.

This is what made Shakespeare's work different from the work of the dramatists he has outlived. They were men of enormous ability. Omit Shakespeare, and you can not name their equals in English literature; but after all, they are literary men. When you read Shakespeare, you are at once impressed with the difference. To put the matter in a paradoxical form — Shakespeare was not a literary

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man. He was a man who expressed himself by writing, but the “literary” side of his work was always secondary, because to him life was more than letters. Therefore in conceiving his characters he thought more of what they were than of what he made them say, and thus they had both to us and to him an existence apart from their words, a life that made their words an expression of more than is said.

These are real people set in farcical situations, not caricatures built of fantasies; and upon this depends the genuine fun of the comedy. The characters must seem natural and real in order that their difficulties and misunderstandings should excite the sympathy that is necessary to the enjoyment of their harmless blundering. The essence of the fun is the misdirected energy of all concerned. Than the Dromios two more earnest, devoted blunderers were never seen. Each is as seriously helpless as a scared kitten tangled in a ball of yarn.

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Although the scene is laid in Ephesus, it is an Ephesus created out of Shakespeare's England, a city wherein there are many things familiar to his audiences if unknown to the ancient Ephesians,—striking clocks, London-inn signs, witchcraft, Pentecost, and the English coins known as angels being among the instances editors cite; but this is but another illustration that anachronisms were not regarded in plays of the time.

One performance of this comedy is noted as taking place December 28, 1594, in Gray's Inn before the students and their guests. Built in 1555-1560, this old building remains as one of the only two existing buildings in which any of Shakespeare's plays were performed, The Middle Temple being the other. The "Comedy of Errors" was given in the same place in December, 1895, by the Elizabethan Stage Society in memory of that earlier performance three centuries before, when we are

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told that there was great confusion caused by the visitors from the Inner Temple who thought seats should have been reserved for them. It is doubtful whether Shakespeare was present since he was (Lee thinks) acting before the Queen at Greenwich the same day.

The great hall of the ancient building gave the actors all the facilities they needed, for when the long tables and benches were pushed aside or set cross-wise, the play could be given before the screen that extends across the end. Two doorways would serve for entrances, the gallery above gave place for the musicians, and might be used as if it were the usual upper stage of the Elizabethan theatre.

Of the performance itself nothing is said, but we know that the evening broke up in disorderly reveling, and was afterward called the Night of Errors. "Gray's Inn was famous for its masques and revels," we are told in Wheatley's "Story of London,"

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and besides the revival of Shakespeare's comedy, the old hall saw during Queen Victoria's Jubilee, in 1887, the repetition of "Masque of Flowers" once acted before James I.

Francis Bacon, we are told, was long the presiding genius of the Inn, and wrote masques for their festivities besides directing them. Here, then, is a locality where Shakespeare may have come in contact with the great philosopher whose title is commemorated in the Verulam Buildings.

CHAPTER VI

THE DRAMATIST'S GROWTH IN POWER

The years preceding 1594, besides their dramatic product, saw the printing of the poem "Lucrece" dedicated to Southampton, a work of power and originality though upon old lines, and another evidence that Shakespeare was trying his genius in various fields. He seems to have taken the measure of every method of work in turn.

"*Titus Andronicus*" showed him engaged upon a play of the old type packed full with a student's classic lore; "*Henry VI.*" was the dramatizing of history from old chronicles; "*Love's Labor's Lost*" was the comedy of verbal cleverness, quick-witted satire, relieved by a talent for dramatic situation and a poetic spirit; the "*Comedy of Errors*," dramatic throughout, had the

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humor of situation and character, just touched with wit in words.

Here is steady advance, and in "Two Gentlemen of Verona" we shall see new territory entered and taken. It should be noted, however, that a critical reading of the last named play might lead to the conclusion that it is either earlier in date than the "Comedy of Errors" or is more carelessly written; for there is much greater skill in the complications of the farcical than in the romantic comedy. The "Two Gentlemen of Verona" shows an advance rather in certain of its characters than in plot and treatment. Proteus and Valentine are wooden enough, but in Sylvia and Julia is more life than in Adriana and Luciana.

The wit of the dramatist, however, takes a finer form. Instead of the word-juggling there is the play of ideas. The talk of Julia with the Host (Act IV., Scene II.), is wit going deeper than conceits of word-

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ing, and sounding puns; and the long dialogue between Launce and Speed, the clownish serving-men (Act. III., Scene I.), is humorous in better fashion than the similar colloquies of "Love's Labor's Lost."

On the other hand, it would require a Shakespeare idolater to report this play a masterpiece of construction. The creak of the ill-fitted joints cannot be disguised. Such flaws are not to be found in his maturer work. Yet the play is Shakespeare's, yet there are in it evidences of increasing dramatic power. The emotions handled are of finer quality, the range of feeling covered is greater. Hurry and scamped work, though that of a great poet, marks this first romantic drama, which bears comparison best with the story from which it is plainly taken — the episode of the shepherdess Felismena, printed very fully in the edition of Henry Morley. It is a lesson in dramatic construction to study the variations Shakespeare has made in the plot.

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As to minor objections, such as the going by ship from Verona to Milan, such carelessness or ignorance seems not to have been regarded by the audience of the time, and hence to have been considered not worth a playwright's thought. As an excuse for a string of traditional puns, the ship would be brought in whenever its mention was convenient. Even a play of so late a date as "The Tempest" exhibits the same recklessness in bringing a vessel near to the city of Milan. In similar cases critics have attempted by far fetched reasoning to justify these blunders, but it would be fairer, as already suggested, to accept all such errors and anachronisms as being ignored through lack of critical instinct in both audience and dramatist. Certainly in the days of Queen Elizabeth it could not have been hard to verify elementary geography.

It was a time of travel and exploration, of intense interest in new lands and maritime adventure. Merchants were opening

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the way to the East Indies, and Spain's galleons were nowhere safe from English privateersmen. Gilbert, Frobisher, Drake, John Smith, Davis, Raleigh, were carrying the English flag into every clime, and the story of their exploits was told in every English village.

India, Africa, Greenland, were better known than ever before, and it is not likely that maps were not to be had in London.

It is hard to believe that no long period intervened between "Two Gentlemen of Verona" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream." If the first-named play with all its imperfections be of the years 1592-3, it is difficult to date the dainty, imaginative fairy-play as following within a year or two. Instead of the fumbling hand of the talented beginner, we now find the ease of a master. From the very beginning there is a different method. Instead of the long-drawn recitals of the "Comedy of Errors" we have in the speech of Egeus, the com-

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plaining father of Hermia, the compact essence of poetry. "This man hath bewitched the bosom of my child"—"stolen the impression of her fantasy"—"strong prevailment in unhardened youth"—the very phrases are imaginative and poetical. And the replies of Theseus bear the same mint-marks, "For aye to be in shady cloister mewed"—"chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon." Lysander, too, has caught poetic phrasing. "Swift as a shadow, short as any dream, Brief as the lightning in the collied night"—"The jaws of darkness do devour it up;" and Helena, "More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear"—"Oh, that your frowns would teach my smiles such skill." Nearly every speech affords these felicities so rare in the preceding plays. And it is not more in minor touches than in general conception that the assured strength is known.

From the entry of the Athenian clowns there is a difference. These tradesmen are

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fools in more than speech. They think as quaintly as they speak. Bottom has more reality than any of the bumpkins in earlier comedies, and makes us follow the very workings of his mind, rejoicing in his elephantine posing, his ponderous facilities. From the pageantry of the Ducal party to the home-spun oddity of the rustic company of players we pass with a force of contrast that heightens each, and then by a still greater transition find ourselves transported to the land of those fairy-like beings that are peculiarly Shakespeare's own.

It is said that it is to him we owe these little beings half mischievous, half kindly, altogether unearthly. The fairies of folklore and of preceding writers are not such as these.

Shakespeare's fairies are the true fairies of modern childhood — pretty, dainty, well disposed toward children, and men and women of good-will, only to be dreaded by doers of evil. Puck, it is true, is a survival

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of the older race, but even his freakish humor is more akin to the fairy disposition than to that of his forerunners who delighted in tormenting man and beast — the goblins, gnomes, and elves whose deeds were of darkness and whose hearts were flinty. Hallam, in his "Literature of Europe," says this play is "altogether original in its fairy machinery, one of the most beautiful conceptions that ever visited the mind of a poet." . . . "The sportive, beneficent invisible population of the air and earth, long since established in the creed of childhood . . . had never for a moment been blended with 'human mortals' among the personages of a drama." The same critic points out that the choice of language, the means of expression of this play, "is never, in poetry, and seldom, in prose, the expression of other dramatists, far less of the people," but is what we have learned to name Shakespearean.

So distinct are the great merits of Shake-

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peare that they must be evident to every reader capable of any appreciation, and so many and so able are the books and essays upon every feature of his life and works that one cannot but feel presumptuous in casting a few light pebbles into the mountainous cairn of comment; and yet, no reader of Shakespeare views him from the same angle. Each of us at times dares disagree with his greatest commentators or resent the judgments of his ablest critics; and each writer upon the inexhaustible theme hopes that he may bring a sympathetic reader or two to see the beauties that appeal especially to himself. Besides, so much of the scholarly criticism is minute, and so much of the general writing about Shakespeare is painfully profound that there would seem to be still room for something between serious scholarship and Charles Lamb's rendition of the plays into children's stories.

This is suggested by considering the

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merits of a masterpiece like "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and it is with some such hope that the reader's attention is directed to a general view of the play rather than to the many adequate and scholarly studies that might be here quoted in large or in small measure. We are attempting to view the dramas progressively. In this play we find a sudden freedom and originality of style and treatment for which no preceding one prepares us. Here are four themes, the Duke and his retinue, the Athenian lovers at cross-purposes, the bumpkin actors, the fairy-folk and their tiny court-quarrel; and all are handled with the imagination of a poet and the easy skill of a practised dramatist. It is an old-fashioned pageant, drawing its inspiration from all sources, but using its materials in the methods learned from the theatre.

From Chaucer's "Knight's Tale," from Plutarch's "Theseus," from Ovid, and old romances may be traced some incidents or

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at least the names of certain characters; but no more than suggestions can fairly be traced to any one source. These authorities no more account for the play than the colorman's stock explains the artist's picture, and from none comes the distinguishing quality of the drama — its atmosphere of summer, of flowers, of poetry. That which gives the drama force, its wide range and resulting contrasts, is also the author's own, and the poetic embroidery, for which all else is but background, could have been added by no other hand than Shakespeare's.

There is hardly a page from which there might not be chosen passages to insert in one of these absurd volumes, a "Beauties of Shakespeare," where the culled flowers remind one of wild flowers crowded and crushed into a shapeless mass by some child's hand that is bearing away spoils from a summer meadow. The play must be read entire. We must go from the courtiers to the tradesmen, from them to

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the fairy gossiping, thence to the human frailty of the Athenian maidens and their lovers, in order to bring to each the right disposition. Thus only can we hear aright the fairy song, sympathize with the crooked course of true love, enjoy the rehearsal of "Pyramus and Thisbe," and appreciate the delicate variations of his themes by which Shakespeare sends Puck among the country louts, Bottom into fairy company, mingles magic with the lovers' troubles, and then weaves all his various colored strands into a fabric more marvelous than any told of in the Arabian Nights —

"But all the story of the night told over,
And all their minds, transfigured so together,
More witnesseth than fancy's images,
And grows to something of great constancy ;
But, howsoever, strange and admirable."

In the last Act we come down to earth and back to sunshine to see the merry-tragical, tedious-brief interlude of "Pyramus and Thisbe," the broadest of farcical fool-

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ery, from its mispunctuated Prologue to the dance that is preferred by the Duke to the offered Epilogue. Then the fairy speech and song end the play with a “so, good night unto you all.”

Here, except that there is yet no hint of the subsequent heights of tragedy and depths of philosophy, we find the first irresistible proof of the world-genius that had arisen in England. That Shakespeare was to show himself capable of all styles was not yet evidenced, but so far as “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” gave him scope, he had here put forth unequalled powers and had far excelled the best work of any English poet or dramatist in any field comparable to his own. Chaucer, Spenser, Sidney, Marlowe, Lyl,— all would have failed in one point or another.

Of Chaucer alone is this doubtful, if we can imagine him developed by the Elizabethan age — an absurd supposition, of course — for he alone had something of

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Shakespeare's range and breadth, of his humor and power of delineation. No other predecessor, or successor, for that matter, could have written a play combining so many excellences. And, if we accept the latest possible date, we must ascribe it to a young man not much over thirty, a young man from the little town of Stratford but a few years before. On the contrary, if we deny him the sole authorship, we have the hopeless task of finding an author capable of the work. Bacon was a learned man, a witty man, a man perhaps to bear comparison with Shakespeare as well as any; but one is obliged to strain credulity to find him sprightly, playful, fantastic. The "New Atlantis" is certainly not in the latitude of Fairyland, nor does it come within Oberon's dominions. If, on the other hand we are led by the freshness and beauty of this fairy-pageant to ascribe it to the inspiration of a country-bred poet, we must look to the forests and hills, the river and

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flowery fields that surround Stratford rather than to the village-life that has left us records of fines, and law-suits, of poaching and drinking-bouts. This play is from the Merry England of poetry rather than the England of John Shakespeare and his glover's shop, or the London of the merchants and courtiers.

CHAPTER VII

“MARLOWE” PLAYS, AND THE FIRST TRAGEDY

It was probably from Marlowe and other such playwrights that Shakespeare took his first hints in revising and making fit for use by his company of players the stock of old plays in manuscript and print that were the property of every theatre. There was no thought and no care about who was doing the work; all helped who had a good suggestion to make. After plays were bought, or had been written over, they were taken to some favorite tavern, and then read aloud to the whole company, who sat about drinking, smoking, joking and no doubt freely criticising whatever they chose.

If a prominent actor felt that his part

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was not effective, he would not hesitate to complain of being wronged. If a minor actor had no part one would be inserted for him. If there was an effective costume or bit of stage-setting that could be brought in, a scene might be changed for the purpose.

No doubt the same process went on even during rehearsals, for the whole object of all concerned was to bring out a play that would please audiences, fill the theatre, and bring in the shillings for the manager. Whatever fine writing was possible must pass the ordeal of fitness for this chief purpose. Then, too, there were the people who crowded into the pit, and who expected "something funny," some boisterous fooling, a jocose clown now and then, or a bit of strong acting, such as a combat with swords or staves, or horseplay of a robust sort. This part of the audience had its rights and traditions, and must be considered as much or even more than the dandified fine gentlemen who bought the right to

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sit upon the stage or to lie at full length in the rushes around its margin, making audible criticisms or playing with dice or cards.

A new play was always an experiment. Naturally the managers and owners of shares in the theatre preferred to bring out such dramas as had proved their popularity, and to revise and improve these where experiment showed them to need rewriting or retouching. The historical plays had by their very subject a strong hold upon the audiences. The personages of these needed no introduction; the kings and queens were well known in their general characters, and the very school children had heard something of the noted events of their reigns, just as American children to-day know the story of Captain Smith and Pocahontas, of Benjamin Franklin and his kite-flying, of Benedict Arnold and his treason.

The names, too, of the great nobles who appear in the historical dramas, had a familiar and native sound to the ears of

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Englishmen. Gloucester, Somerset, Essex, Beaufort — there were memorials of these great men and their houses everywhere about. Their coats-of-arms were the ornaments of church and castle, their badges were tavern signs. The great men who were making a great England despite the enmities of European foes were the descendants and successors of these who played again their parts upon the stage.

We who read these plays three thousand miles from the “precious stone set in a silver sea,” we who are sundered by time and by history from the men of the “sceptered isle,” lack the patriotic interest in the plays that deal with the fortunes of its kings; but we must not forget what the strife of factions meant to audiences of the days of Elizabeth, the descendants of men like those they saw upon the stage. It is no wonder that theatres found it profitable to “tell sad stories of the death of kings,” and that Shakespeare’s talents should be in

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demand to add his master touches to the stock of historical plays. We do not know all with whom he worked; but from the time of his co-operation we can find evidence of the new hand and the greater brain.

In the edition of Henry Morley, the Three Parts of Henry VI. are marked to show what lines and passages are thought due to Shakespeare; and these increase until the Third Part begins to show those characteristics that make it stand far above the level of the First. Careful study of texts leads critics to believe that Shakespeare worked with the older plays before him, altering, amending, omitting as demanded by stage-considerations and translating into more poetic forms where his imagination was touched, but in the main leaving the general movement of the plot and the dramatic situations. The Second Part shows the general purpose of the reviser or revisers to be clearness. Motives are shown,

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characters explained, situations made plain; and, in addition, speeches admitting of more poetic expansion are liberally treated.

Thus a stiff spectacle is made a poetic drama alive with human feeling. Marionettes have received the breath of life, have brains, hearts, passions, a past and a future. All this is due to revision, for it is not in the originals.

In the Third Part there is less difference of merit between the old play, "The True Tragedie of the Duke of York," and its revision. Perhaps both show Shakespeare's hand, being both revisions of a cruder original.

After reading the series of three plays, one regrets that any reader who has not yet enjoyed the story of these personages of the past and their lives, can waste time over fiction that does not compare with the "novel" set forth in the dramas, whether the basis of comparison be in interest, incident, variety, character-drawing, adven-

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ture, surprise, or what you will. And with all other qualities, there is in the plays the exquisite play of most poetic imagination. They are not to be compared, no doubt, with Shakespeare's best work; but with what else will they not brook comparison?

It is believed that the popular success of these plays led Shakespeare to follow them by his "Tragedy of King Richard the Third," which is really a sequel, following the fortunes of England in the hands of those to whom it fell by the chances of battlefield and intrigue. Largely Shakespeare's, it is imitative of Marlowe, and according to some critics, contains much of Marlowe's work. Read, as it should be, immediately after the Henry VI. series, Richard III. is a mere continuation, and not in all respects superior to the best of the preceding members of the series, certainly not to the Third Part.

But there are reasons why Richard when put upon the stage overshadows other char-

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acters in these plays, reasons that have made him a favorite with great actors.

He completely dominates the play; he appears in scenes of every sort, being plotter, lover, hypocrite, king, and warrior in one, and having in each of his moods long speeches that make his character and motives plain to every hearer; he has no rival in the interest of the audience; and though he is a villain, yet his shrewdness and ruthlessness compel a sort of admiration. The only other characters that excite any sympathy in this drama are women and children, for even young Richmond is represented as an untried youth. This play shows Marlowe's influence so strongly that critics have doubted whether it be Shakespeare's; but there is found in the treatment a method that is not Marlowe's, and the character of Richard has more of humanity than we can ascribe to any pen but Shakespeare's. Besides, taking all the historical plays together, we find in them a

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breadth of view that belongs to no other dramatist. There is a constant enforcing of the lesson that even kings must yield to the moral law. The growth of this idea was the cause of the revolution that de-throned the Stuarts, and Shakespeare's plays had no slight part in educating the English people to this point. Dowden points out that Shakespeare, in drawing Richard, followed Holinshed's chronicle, especially being guided by that portion which paints him blackest. This came through a history by Sir Thomas More, who "probably derived it from Cardinal Morton, chancellor of Henry VII., and Richard's enemy." Modern research has relieved Richard Plantagenet of some crimes, but has not made him by any means immaculate, and no historian will ever be able to remove the stains left upon him by the play.

These years of Shakespeare's life are those concerning which there is least infor-

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mation. Leaving Stratford during 1586 or 1587, we know nothing more of him until 1592, when we find him a playwright, the blank period covering from the poet's twenty-third to his twenty-eighth year. Of the dramatic work of this time we know, and we may imagine the life of the hack-writer and actor, with enough vividness to feel no surprise that no record of that life remains. What record could there be except the appearance of the plays?

But these years were eventful, crowded with happenings worthy of record, especially if we look at them from our present point of view. They comprise in 1586 the battle of Zutphen where Sidney gave the cup of water to the wounded soldier, and dying, was buried with the ceremonies due to one who was regarded as the flower of Elizabethan chivalry; the trial and execution of Mary Queen of Scots, for whose death the courtier Babington was made scapegoat, and thereby William Brewster

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was turned from a courtier to a member of the band of Pilgrims that founded New England; the publication of Camden's "Britannia," a great storehouse of English local history. In 1587, there is the visit of the Earl of Leicester's players to Stratford, and with these actors Shakespeare may have gone to London, to find Marlowe the most popular playwright; and in the same year we may be interested to remember that there was a persecution of Christians in Japan, though we may be sure Shakespeare had no interest in far away Nippon. In 1588 came and went the Armada, leaving Englishmen united with a new patriotism; and the same year saw the building of the Rialto at Venice, and the death of Paul Veronese. Two years later, the battle of Ivry brought fame to Henry of Navarre, and the "Faerie Queene" appeared to glorify the name of Spenser, while Sidney's "Arcadia" did honor to the dead Sidney.

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It is hard to connect these events save as indications of the rich life of the period when Shakespeare began his work. The world had suddenly awakened.

About the time of the writing of "Richard III.," say 1592-1594, there were in London many events that concerned Shakespeare. The "Rose Theatre" was opened by Philip Henslowe (that manager from whose diary are derived many facts relating to the plays of the time), and here plays were given by "Lord Strange's Company" and the "Lord Admiral's Players," the two seeming to be allied for a time. "Henry VI." was among the plays given at the "Rose." In 1592 there was a visitation of the plague by which 28,000 perished in London. This caused the theatres to be closed, and sent the actors to travel in the country, Shakespeare's company visiting, among other places, Bristol and Shrewsbury. In 1593, Marlowe was killed in a fight with a serving-man, and,

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the year before, Robert Greene's pitiable death had occurred.

Whether "Romeo and Juliet" was written before or after "Richard III." is doubtful, since it was acted first in a crude form and afterward revised. Some authorities place it among his earliest works, thinking it may have been written as early as 1591, when Shakespeare was but twenty-seven. But later revisions had undoubtedly improved the play before it took the form in which it was first printed, in 1597, and even after this printing the other quarto editions show changes. That dated 1609 is considered the best text, and the First Folio was based upon that version.

To the Englishmen of this time and later, there was romance in the very name of Italy. That land was the home of poetry and painting, of learning and literature. "Romeo and Juliet" has the atmosphere of that romantic clime, and proves that the dramatist felt its charm.

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If written as early as 1591 the same period saw also the production of the "Comedy of Errors," and parts of "Henry VI."; and it was within a year from this time that Shakespeare was accused by Greene of being "an upstart crow beautified by the feathers" of other dramatic authors. It was at this time also that the strange new drink "tea" was introduced into England, and that whalebone came from Cape Breton, both showing how commerce was bringing foreign goods to the English public. The establishment of the Bank of England was a proof of prosperity at home, and that of Trinity College at Dublin may be noted as a sign of the advancement of learning. Shakespeare had been in London about four years, and was already a popular and successful playwright, and at least a respectable actor.

Yet "Romeo and Juliet" seems too powerful a tragedy to be placed among the

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products of Shakespeare's early days. There is a singleness of purpose and a directness in carrying it out that is in marked contrast to the treatment of the early comedies — a simplicity that usually comes only late in a writer's career. One may find a dominating idea throughout the play, one to which all else is kept subordinate. We are never allowed to forget the pathetic fate of Juliet, that pretty little fly whose struggles entangle her ever more fatally in the web of woes. Even Romeo excites less pity, and is less sadly isolated. He has at least a few friends and sympathizers, while Juliet is alone. Where Romeo is in the world and a free agent, Juliet is the helpless victim of her surroundings, and except in her two or three brief meetings with her lover, receives not even sympathy.

Swinburne recognizes this. He says, of "Romeo and Juliet":

There is little feminine interest in the earliest comedies : there is less in the first history. In the

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first tragedy there is nothing else, or nothing but what is so subservient and subordinate as simply to bring it out and throw it into relief. In the work of a young poet this difference would or should be enough to establish and explain the fact that though he might be greater than all other men in history and comedy, he was still greater in tragedy."

All this seems a proof that the first tragedy is of a later date than the earliest assigned to it. Besides, it has the simplicity that comes from mastery. There is little to take attention from the plot itself.

The story can hardly be made more uncomplicated than in the play, and the result is to enhance the "pity of it." One feels, either upon reading or witnessing the drama, that but for the merest blind chance all might have gone happily for the youthful pair. Everything accents this regret. Mercutio's death, almost by treachery; Tybalt's recognition of Romeo; the detention of the Friar's letter; the meeting of Paris and Romeo at the tomb; the Nurse's heartlessness; Capulet's anger and tyranny;

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Lady Capulet's coldness and submission to her husband; Balthazar's report of Juliet's death — to which of these is the catastrophe due? *If*, we say,— and then pause, silent because of the helpless outcome.

Those critics who have read an ethical purpose into the tragedy, Ten Brink, for example, speak of “the love that conquered hate”; but the picture is rather of the hate that conquered love. The lovers were in the right, the rest in the wrong; and that is the true pathos of the drama. One does not care to break a butterfly upon a wheel, or to chop a poetical masterpiece into blocks of logic; but Schopenhauer has so acutely analyzed the sympathy that makes “all the world love a lover,” that it is worth while to say a word on the subject. The German philosopher has told us that it is to the interest of the whole race to have young and suitable lovers married. Our instinctive sympathy is with them. We resent their separation by prejudices, customs, or

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selfish motives, as contrary to the instinct of race-betterment. In "Romeo and Juliet," therefore, we are heart and soul on the side of the young lovers, and their defeat and death touches our deepest instincts and desires. If imaginatively we identify ourselves with hero or heroine, as to some extent we must, we also feel the disappointing of the noblest and the strongest impulse of our nature, that of virtuous love.

As to the reconciling of the irascible Capulets and the hardly known Montagues — we can echo Mercutio's heartfelt curse, "a plague o' both your houses!" Who cares anything about them? If Romeo had eloped with Juliet, by the kind assistance of the witty and debonair Mercutio — who would have inquired after the Veronese relatives of either?

The reconciliation of the houses is an alleviation of the tragedy only because we have seen the mischief wrought by the feud,

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and we rejoice that the cause of evil is cured. Even Ten Brink says "Their *blood* quenches the flames of the hatred which has disunited their families," admitting by his metaphor that it is the tragedy that made peace, a peace due to horror and remorse.

Professor Caird of England, in an essay upon "Some Characteristics of Shakespeare," has given us in a general view of the renaissance in England reasons for the great dramatist's treatment of certain subjects. For instance, it has been wondered why so deep a thinker and so great a poet has not shown some religious bias. But this essay explains that the reformation in England differed from that on the Continent of Europe, in being presented rather as a political than as a religious movement.

The English church had its reformers, but Protestantism in England took rather the form at first of patriotic support of Queen Elizabeth against the power of Spain.

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Until after the death of Shakespeare the despotism of the mediæval church had not given place to that of Puritanism, and men were freed from old bonds before feeling new restraints. The triumph of the national cause, the power of England on sea, the acquisition of the new learning, the increasing knowledge of the world — all had brought to Englishmen a sense of independence, of ambition, of self-consciousness. Interest in their own history and their own destiny was awakened, and they turned to the stage where they might see their past revived, and their future foreshadowed. The drama that had its origin in the mysteries and miracle-plays was set free from its dependence upon the church, and seized upon secular ideas because they had come uppermost in men's minds.

Shakespeare saw the possibilities of the drama, and made it the interpreter of men's beliefs and ideals. The historical plays — that long cycle extending from the early

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Plantagenet Kings to the birth of Queen Elizabeth — are a complete epitome of the political ideas of his time, and cover the whole formative period of England's history. Considering, as has been said by William Staunton in his edition of the plays, "that Shakespeare wrote without any of the advantages we derive from the researches modern investigation has brought to bear upon the characters of particular personages, and the secrets of peculiar transactions * * * the marvel is how he has contrived to combine the highest dramatic effect with so close an adherence to historic truth." Indeed, it has often happened that closer investigation has removed charges of error based upon too superficial a knowledge of English history, and Shakespeare's broad sketches of character have been found truer than the historians' more minute but less sympathetic studies.

We may glance at two of these plays in

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their chronological order. "King John" comes first, though not first written. It follows the earlier forms of the same drama, and thus departs more than any of the rest from the historical basis. The earliest "King John" was a pageant, and was so changed by the introduction of the dramatic form as to change the old chronicle-play to a true drama. "Richard II." marks a still greater advance, since the author was less confined by using material already at hand. So great a critic as Coleridge says of this play: "In itself, and for the closet, I feel no hesitation in placing it as the first and most admirable of all Shakespeare's purely historical plays." While we may pause before accepting so sweeping a verdict, remembering the merits of "Henry V.," "Henry VI.," and "Richard III.," yet the authority of Coleridge has weight enough to bespeak the most careful consideration of a play he ranks above such competitors.

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To the student of Shakespeare in relation to his times, this drama will always be of especial interest because of the jealousy with which it was regarded by Queen Elizabeth. And with reason, since malcontents were glad to use it as a sort of object-lesson for the deposing of a sovereign. It is interesting also to see how Shakespeare handles the subject of "the divine right of kings." In the Elizabethan days it was yet too early to depict Richard as a criminal deprived of his abused office by the righteous revolt of the oppressed; and this sentiment has enriched literature with the pathetic speeches of the fallen monarch, speeches of linked jewels.

"Richard II." furnishes an excellent illustration of the need for knowing the general conceptions underlying a drama. If we read it without knowledge of the feeling of Elizabethan subjects toward their king, we shall become bewildered. The appearance of Richard in the opposed

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roles of villain and martyr will jar upon the reader's sense of fitness, and he will feel inconsistent sentiments toward king, usurper, and the satellites of both.

On the other hand, having a clear understanding of Shakespeare's attitude toward a wicked king who becomes the victim of a worthy rebel, the reader may appreciate fully the marvelously delicate play of sentiment, expressed in language that could spring from no other brain, and illustrated with a profuse imagery drawn from a world-wide treasury.

Until these mainsprings of the action are grasped, notes, comments, criticisms, tend merely to increase the mind's perplexities. It is the importance of taking a general view that has led so many great authorities to urge a first reading without consulting notes or emendations. Best of all, see a play performed; next best, hear it read aloud without comment; if neither is possible before you begin your reading, at least

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read for the general view. Pass over what you do not understand, but get into the swing of the main currents, and leave minute acquaintance with minor eddies until later.

The broad-minded, clear-headed Dr. Johnson may be quoted as authority for this advice:

“ Let him that is yet unacquainted with the powers of Shakespeare, and who desires to feel the highest pleasure that the drama can give, read every play from the first scene to the last, with utter negligence of all his commentators. When his fancy is once on the wing, let it not stoop at correction or explanation. . . . And when the pleasures of novelty have ceased, let him attempt exactness, and read the commentators. . . . Parts are not to be examined until the whole has been surveyed; there is a kind of intellectual remoteness necessary for the comprehension of any great work in its full design and in its

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true proportions; a close approach shows the smaller niceties, but the beauty of the whole is discerned no longer."

But this advice does not apply to acquiring such preliminary knowledge as will put you into some such attitude of mind as those for whom the drama was written. What the author assumed them to feel and know (in general) is to be acquired by us so that he may speak to us as he spoke to them. Learning, wisdom, talent, wit, humor are wasted upon ignorance or dullness; and some preparation is required even from the listener or reader to whom Shakespeare appeals.

We learn something of the influence exerted by Shakespeare's plays in his own time by the story of the revival of "Richard II.," at the time of Essex and Southampton's attempt to stir up rebellion against the Queen. We also have accounts of the playing of "Richard II." with all references to the deposition of the king

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omitted, though it is difficult to see how a complete play could be presented with that pivotal happening lacking.

Among Shakespeare's additions to this play is that exquisite apostrophe to England spoken by John of Gaunt in Act II.:

“This royal throne of kings, this sceptered isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,”

which in a few lines holds the essence of the impassioned patriotism that has made England a world empire.

Imagine the fortunes of this young man Shakespeare during the five or six years since he had left Stratford. Whatever may have been the true cause of his removing to London, there is no doubt that the future must have seemed dark to him at the time he decided to throw himself into the ocean of London life. We know that his father, from having been a prosperous merchant and a man of substance and worship, was harassed by debts, possibly persecuted for

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his religious opinions, pitied by those who once had looked up to him as a prominent official.

Young Shakespeare was married to a wife much older than himself, the father of three children, and with no way to provide for them except such petty trading or serving as a small village offered. To some men, to his own neighbors, the life would have been trying, perhaps, but entirely tolerable; but to the mind of Shakespeare, a mind the most sensitive ever possessed by mortal, the life of a small tradesman in that market-town was simply an impossibility.

It is unlikely that there was any sympathy with his wild project of journeying to London. It seems probable that he may have been a runaway. And then, after a few years of drudgery, of serving as theatrical factotum, the busy pen begins its magic work. The very visions that were his plagues in Stratford, as if they were sprites

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resenting exile to a sphere in which all was uncongenial, now became the good geniuses of his fortunes. Through the pen and the stage, he learns that his imaginings have the same power over others as over himself. He becomes the mouthpiece of London, of England, of humanity. The companion of the roistering lads of a country town, he has become the friend and intimate of young noblemen. He is welcomed everywhere. He becomes a citizen of no mean city, and is made free of London, when London is dominating England, and England dreams of dominating the world. Is it strange that the mind of Shakespeare should share in the buoyant spirit of his age? His own career repeated in miniature that of his race and his nation. Like the English and their little island kingdom, he had left behind him the day of small things, and had come into the world to be measured, and to find himself the equal, even the superior of his fellows.

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His rise is hardly more of a miracle than the aggrandizement of England, and his plays embody the growth of his own mind not more than the sudden expansion of the ideals of his race. Both were due to the same cause — the freeing of native power from hampering restrictions, from bonds that had decayed.

There are those who cannot accept this miracle. They cannot accept the man of Stratford as the world's supreme dramatist and supreme poet. If they express their doubt, it is demanded that they supply another author for the immortal plays. Of course this is at present impossible, it may ever remain impossible. The plays must be credited to Shakespeare until a better claim can be made out for another. Yet there is no harm in honest doubt, in impartial investigation. Let us all gather every fact throwing light upon the authorship of each play and poem, and then be guided by the evidence wherever it may

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lead us. This is the only path that leads to truth.

We all know that much is ascribed to Shakespeare without sufficient cause. Every critic, editor, or scholar admits this. The only dispute is in fairly apportioning the credit. Bigotry is possible on both sides. We may be sure that any sweeping solution of the question is wrong. It is certain from what we know of the methods of playwrights in Elizabeth's time, that many hands were at work in plays published under one name. To determine the different authorships is a problem, requiring minute and critical study, and it is the duty of each of us to approach it in a fair and candid spirit. The truth will soonest come from an open arena wherein the whole controversy may be decided without fear or favor.

That there is a question as to the authorship is hardly to be denied. The authorities who have expressed a doubt are too

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many and too weighty to be ignored. Professor Ten Brink says: "The Bacon-Shakespeare controversy has developed a whole literature, which at the beginning of the year 1882 counted 255 books and dissertations, and can now no longer be so easily overlooked. We are not at liberty, therefore, simply to ignore it." So much from a critic who is a professed believer in the traditional authorship.

But let us see what has been thought by some other men of learning and judgment; men without prejudice.

Emerson, in his "Representative Men," says: "The Egyptian verdict of the Shakespeare Societies comes to mind, that he was a jovial actor and manager. I cannot marry this fact to his verse. Other admirable men have led lives in some sort of keeping with their thought; but this man in wide contrast. Had he been less, had he reached only the common measure of great authors, of Bacon, of Milton, Tasso,

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Cervantes, we might leave the fact in the twilight of human fate: but that this man of men . . . who planted the standard of humanity some furlongs forward into chaos should not be wise for himself, it must even go into the world's history that the best poet led an obscure and profane [that is, not sacred] life, using his genius for the public amusement."

The great German critic, William Schlegel, deemed the received account of Shakespeare's life: "A mere fabulous story, a blind and extravagant error." Coleridge exclaims, on the same subject: "What? Are we to have miracles in sport? . . . Does God choose idiots by whom to convey divine truths to man?"

These men are expressing surprise rather than doubt. They accepted the tradition of authorship, but could not reconcile the plays with the story of the author's life. Later critics are less cautious. John Bright says bluntly, "Any one who believes that

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William Shakespeare of Stratford wrote *Hamlet* and *Lear* is a fool," which is plain speaking if not polite. Lord Palmerston also stated his opinion that the "man of Stratford" was not the author; and there are plenty more leaning to the same opinion, the poet Whittier among them.

It would not be difficult to quote any number of adverse authorities, in favor of the traditional view, but that is unnecessary, since the only object is to suggest that one may doubt and still be in good company. For in order to approach the study of the dramatist and the plays, the mind should be freed from fixed prejudice either way, and then consider the evidence upon its merits. Possibly the result will be doubt, and nothing more; but even that is preferable to ignorance with prejudice. Doubt gives keen vision, prejudice blinds us.

The young student of Shakespeare must in any event make himself familiar with the

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received views in regard to the man, the plays, the poems, and the times wherein they originated. Until reasonably acquainted with the traditional account, and fitted by appreciative reading and study to know what the name Shakespeare means in the world's literature, it is idle to enter upon the controversies maintained among scholars. When fairly acquainted with the merits of the questions discussed there can be no objection to taking sides, and taking such part in critical warfare as conviction demands. Meanwhile, it may safely be said that he studies Shakespeare to little advantage who does not learn tolerance.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SUCCESSFUL PLAYWRIGHT AND HIS LONDON

There were left only five or six years of the sixteenth century, Shakespeare was still comparatively young, and had been in London about ten years when he had thus firmly established his fame and secured the beginning of his fortune. Coming to the city an unknown and penniless adventurer, he had, by dint of doing well whatever came to his hand made friends and found work in the world.

With the tradition that declares him at first no more than the care-taker of gentlemen's horses is coupled the statement that he made himself popular even in this capacity. As an actor, the apology of

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Chettle for Greene's attack declares Shakespeare "excellent in the quality he professes," and Greene's envy at least shows that the young man who adapted and rewrote the theatre's stock-plays was taking away the employment of the best of his competitors in this work. That he was steady and industrious we may know both by his rapid rise in his vocations, and also by the contrast he presents with those who were doing similar work, men like Greene and Marlowe.

Where these men and their like left an unsavory reputation or the record of their excesses, Shakespeare's life proves itself to have been reputable by its outcome, by the nature of his work, and by the character of his associates. His two long poems, "Venus and Adonis" and "The Rape of Lucrece," were both dedicated to Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, a man of the highest standing; and this same Earl, it is said, gave most liberally to the

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establishment of the Globe Theatre, proving that the actor and playwright, Shakespeare, had the favor and countenance of some of the most influential men of the day.

At about the same period we learn of the death of Shakespeare's forerunner and teacher, Marlowe, who died in a duel or brawl at the hands of a serving-man.

Shakespeare's company was chosen to act before the Queen at Greenwich palace, for the treasurer's account mentions him and his friends, Kempe and Burbage, as performers in two comedies or interludes. On the same day with that of one of these appearances before the Queen, "The Comedy of Errors" was performed in the hall of Gray's Inn, as already noted, though it is not known whether Shakespeare was present. The play formed part of a programme of "exceptional magnificence, sports that were to include burlesque performances, masques, plays, dances and processions," as Halliwell-Phillips tells us.

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High scaffolds were put up in the hall for the revelers and their guests, and there was a deputation from students of the Inner Temple to add to the crowd and consequent confusion. The programme was abandoned in part, but the "Comedy of Errors" was performed, and gave to the occasion the name the "Night of Errors."

The performers of the comedy being professionals, it is quite possible that Shakespeare was one of them; and if so, we have knowledge of his presence in one of the only two buildings still standing that have been the scene of the production of his plays in his lifetime.

In 1596 Shakespeare's company, owing to the death of their patron, the Chamberlain, became known as the "Servants of Lord Hunsdon," his eldest son, and under this name played "Romeo and Juliet" at the Curtain Theatre with enough success to lead a publisher to bring out an edition of the play from such material as he could

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obtain. The corrected version appeared in print three years later.

At this time Shakespeare is thought to have been living on the south side of the Thames near the Bear Garden in Southwark, a residence convenient to the Rose Theatre, which had been built four or five years before. This theatre was under the management of Philip Henslowe, for whom many of Shakespeare's plays were written; but the company with which the dramatist was connected also gave performances elsewhere.

It is not easy for us to reconstruct the life of the time even with all the help that is to be derived from the many books on the subject.

We must picture first the streets, narrow, poorly paved, with a channel or gutter in the centre toward which both sides of the roadway slope — a sort of open sewer, far from pleasant whether the weather was wet or dry, and a receptacle for the refuse of

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the city houses. Then we imagine the houses, leaning together as they rise two, three, or more stories, until the gables seem exchanging confidences. The street-floor was often a shop or stall, somewhat protected from rain by the overhang of the upper floors, open in fair weather and summer, and exhibiting wares for sale. Through the shop front could be seen the proprietor and his 'prentices at work, and in the windows above the housewife and the maids could lean out and gaze at the street below or could exchange the gossip of the neighborhood with their friends over the way.

Much business was transacted in the streets in fair weather, and there were many passing to and fro, richly dressed noblemen on horseback, arrayed in brightly-colored costumes that cost a fortune, and attended by footmen who were many or few according to the rank of their masters. There were men afoot followed by servants

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who bore their swords. There were the apprentices, standing in front of the shops to attract customers by glib talk of the wares within, or passing to and fro on errands.

Ragged vagabonds in plenty went up and down the streets; crippled soldiers returned from fighting the Spanish in the Low Countries, or sailors ashore seeking to spend their pay before undertaking another cruise to the tropics or the frozen north, with the hope of rich prizes and sudden wealth, should they succeed in overhauling some tall Spanish galleon.

A modern observer would have been surprised to see so few vehicles in the streets. Merchandise was transported mainly upon pack-animals, and wagons were seldom met with, though certainly not unknown. Coal, vegetables, wares of all sorts were carried in sacks, bags and bundles on the shoulders of sturdy porters, and many a squabble arose through disputes as to which passer-

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by should be turned out toward the wall or the puddles of the gutter.

But busy as were the streets, the river Thames seemed as crowded as they. Every species of craft, from the ship that had been around the world to the tiny cockleshell, moved to and from one landing or another. There were richly decorated barges, pleasure boats carrying the family and friends of some rich merchant, bent upon picnicking upon the shores near Greenwich; there were small rowboats whose owners made their living by ferrying theatre-goers over to the Southwark side; there were freighters of every size and description, for the river was the artery of Elizabeth's London, and here the current of life flowed fullest, whether moved by love of pleasure or hope of gain.

The city itself, the public buildings, were the pride of Londoners, and they gloried in the antiquity of the Tower, the size of St. Paul's, the beauty and convenience of the

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Royal Exchange, the width of their principal streets, the length and bustling traffic of London Bridge, the historic memories connected with London Stone, and the other noted landmarks of their home.

Besant, in his “London,” imagines himself to be conducted about the city in the year 1603 by the famous historian Stow. He thus succeeds in bringing before his readers a most life-like picture of the times, and is able to conduct them through the streets, to the taverns, along by the Thames, and even brings back a vision of the performance of “*Troilus and Cressida*” at the Globe Theatre, followed by a view of Shakespeare and his companions at supper in the Falcon Inn, not far from the home of Shakespeare on the Bank-side. But later authorities deny that there were inns on the Bank-side in Shakespeare’s day. Of all the sights he witnesses in the imaginary tour through the London of the Tudors, none is more surprising to us than that of

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the interior of St. Paul's, where the full tide of street life is shown ebbing and flowing through nave and transept without the slightest consciousness on the part of the Elizabethan Londoners that they have passed from outdoors into the precincts of a church.

Suppose Trinity Church in New York City to be thrown open, and the infinitely varied life of Broadway to flow through its nave, making it in all respects a part of that great business thoroughfare, and you will understand what the London cathedral floor was to people of the time. Within its walls they walked, talked, jested, quarreled; they carried the burdens of merchandise; the peddlers and small merchants even made it their place of business; and in none of these frequenters of the church was there a sense of anything incongruous or profane. Thus in "Richard III.," Act III., Scene VI., Shakespeare introduces a scrivener with a placard that is to be posted in St.

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Paul's as if upon a public highway; and in Traill's "Social England" we are told that tailors met their customers and measured them for garments in the same sacred building, and lawyers and clients held there their consultations.

The social life of Elizabeth's time cannot be compressed into brief compass, but must be studied from many points of view before it can be at all understood.

Thus we should have to take up in turn each class of the many ranks into which the English were divided, for we could not argue from the life of a merchant to that of an idler about town, nor from the pursuits of Sir Philip Sidney could we understand the daily occupations of a small London shopkeeper.

Readers of Shakespeare will acquire some notion of the life led by the men of action, something of rural life, and a glimpse of London ways; but even in those all-embracing chronicles of the time there is little hint

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of the every-day drudgery that made England a great commercial nation; of the small trades of the city streets; of the religious observances and persecutions; of the very sights and scenes that were common-places to the author, but would be of absorbing interest to us.

There is in Sir Walter Scott's "Fortunes of Nigel" a picture of London life under King James that will help us to know intimately what it must have been a few years earlier; and no student of the times can afford to miss Scott's marvelous reconstruction of these old London days.

We might spend many a day in visiting the market-places to see the women of the time in their queer caps and ruffs chaffering over baskets of vegetables; in watching with indignation the suffering of some unfortunate victim of the pillory, pelted and jeered at by the brutal city crowds; in frequenting the open parks and grounds and gazing at the pageants of the trade guilds or the

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merry-makings upon May days and other holidays. Even the routine of the day's work, the opening of shops by the 'prentices, the setting out of wares to catch the eyes of passers-by, the methods of traffic, would be new in a thousand minor matters.

The dress of each class, from the high starched ruffs and dyed hair of the Queen, a walking treasury of bejeweled finery, to the rags of the wandering fiddler, would furnish an endless subject of study. The customs at the table, the services in the churches, the keeping or non-keeping of Sunday, the street ballads, the quarters of the city devoted to each special trade, the street brawls, the wedding or funeral processions — all might be taken up in turn and made the subject of a long discourse by an observer from our own times.

In the midst of these bewildering differences it is with a sense of relief that we find the laws of human nature not so different but that we may understand the passions

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and motives Shakespeare has preserved for us; and we may believe that if we could have sat with the audiences in The Theatre, the Curtain, the Rose or the Globe we should have laughed or wept with the people of the time at the pictures of life presented by Shakespeare's fellow-actors. There would be allusions we could not understand; but considering the changes that have transformed his century to ours, it is remarkable that so little in the dramas is beyond our sympathy.

CHAPTER IX

A DAY WITH SHAKESPEARE — “THE MERCHANT OF VENICE.”

The life led by Shakespeare in this bustling world of London we can only guess out for ourselves, remembering that our surmises will be true only very generally. Probably he lived in lodgings attended by some old serving-woman such as he has recreated for us in Juliet's nurse, or Dame Quickly the hostess. The furnishing of his chamber was likely, in a man of his character, to be simple.

We can imagine him awaking in the morning to see the sunlight coming through the small panes of a latticed window, and arraying himself in his long hose, trunk, unstarched shirt with ruffles at the wrists,

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his ruff or broad collar, such as we see in the old portraits; and then, having buckled on the rapier without which no gentleman went abroad, and possibly having taken the lightest of food to break his fast, he leaves the house and through the open fields makes his way to the river.

Calling a boat he is ferried across to the city side, and climbing the stairs makes his way through the streets to the theatre where a rehearsal is to take place in preparation for the afternoon's performance.

The actors, none too respectable many of them, are lounging about the stage, joking, laughing, playing tricks on one another, or perhaps studying their parts from the manuscript playbooks in their hands.

Since Shakespeare was called a *Johannes Factotum*, we may be sure that he made himself useful during the rehearsals, and we may imagine him, holding the text of the play, following critically the efforts of some ambitious boy to impersonate the impulsive,

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pretty Juliet, and in that character to receive the vows of romantic Romeo without destroying the illusion of the scene by some boyish awkwardness of gesture or bearing.

What must have been the shock to Shakespeare's poetic soul when he saw his exquisite poetic fancies and his golden lines embodied in the ignorant rendition of some yawning half-schooled boy, or his heroic kings represented by a frowsy fellow dragged from the card table to the rehearsal!

And yet there were other actors who may have been the equals of those of later times, of Forrest, Kean, Macready, Booth, Irving; and to hear the written lines waked to life by Richard Burbage, the greatest tragedian of the day, or by Kempe, the popular comedian, in some degree compensated the author for the boyish women and unshaven queens. That Shakespeare felt the shortcomings of the boy-actors we may know from the passage in "Antony

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and Cleopatra," where the beautiful Egyptian says, "I shall see some squeaking Cleopatra *boy* my greatness," and also from the dramatist's custom of causing his women-characters to disguise themselves in doublet and hose whenever the action admits.

That he could write his exquisite plays without being hampered by the thought of their inadequate staging and presentation is one of the most striking proofs of how vivid to his own imagination were the figures he created, and how strongly he pictured them.

Well or ill done, the rehearsal came to an end before noon, and then Master Shakespeare and one or two friends had time to think of the first real meal of the day. They make their way to some favorite tavern, and calling to the waiter, with his answer, "Anon, anon, sir!" they are soon provided by the host of the Boar's Head or the Mermaid with a bountiful dinner,

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served upon a narrow table covered with a white cloth.

Each guest had his napkin and knife, but of course no fork. Bread in loaves was placed within reach, and a salt-cellar or box here and there. Besant describes such a meal as beginning with roast beef with peas and buttered beans in midsummer, with fresh herrings in the fall, and in winter with salt meats. Poultry followed the first course, and then came cakes and fruits, while wine was served during or after the meal, and clay pipes and tobacco made a finish — though, strangely enough, it is said that in all Shakespeare's plays occurs no mention of tobacco smoking.

After dinner, which was eaten without unnecessary talk, conversation is general until it is time to go to the play, which begins, owing to the difficulty of lighting the theatre artificially, early in the afternoon. If the company are playing on the Bankside they return to the river and are rowed

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across, dodging skillfully among the plying craft, bantering the loquacious watermen, and changing greetings with acquaintances on the way to the theatre or the Bear Gardens. The performance we have already described. Perhaps Shakespeare himself takes a minor part, and in the intervals of his own speeches whispers now and then a word of direction to the others, or makes mental note of some line needing correction or capable of improvement. That the author of the plays had observed just how each line was received by audiences is evident to every critical student of the changes made in successive versions.

After the play followed supper, possibly at a favorite tavern, where the points of the acting were discussed anew, or, if tired of that topic, the men could listen to the stirring news of the day, of which in those times there was no lack.

Then, for we must allow even Shakespeare some time for his work with the pen,

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we follow the dramatist to his home and see him seated before his table, with his cloak, sword, feathered hat and gloves tossed aside, busied in remaking old plays or in creating new, under the flickering flames of three or four candles blown about by the breeze coming from the river.

We see the dramatist consulting the books of his well-worn little library—"Holinshed's Chronicles," Florio's translation of "Montaigne's Essays," a volume of North's "Plutarch," Greene's novel, "Dorastus and Fawnia," whence came the story of "A Winter's Tale,"—the list might be unreasonably spun out, for it is one of the Shakespeare puzzles that we must credit him with a range and depth of reading that seems beyond all fair probability.

Perhaps the plays represent the work of many hands, the learning of many minds, all fused in the process of most masterly revision. There were many dramatists, known and unknown, an enormous num-

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ber of plays produced and unproduced; and in the custom of the time there was ample excuse for any author who chose to avail himself freely of all the resources and helps upon which he could lay hands. As time goes on we are finding more and more material embodied in the Shakespeare plays, but are less and less able to account for the genius that from this literary lumber-room built the Aladdin palace the dramatist bequeathed to the world.

Besides their merit as works of art, the plays must also have possessed that of immediate popularity. They must contain references to affairs of the day or be so constructed as to appeal to the sentiment uppermost in the minds of theatre-goers. Walter Bagehot in his striking and valuable essay "Shakespeare — the Man," points out that the dramatist was above all things, and despite his proved learning, a man of the world rather than a bookish man. He

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speaks of all things as one who has come into real contact with them. He sees them apart from the conventional qualities given them by writers, and shows us his own thoughts about the men, women, affairs, flowers, fields — about the busy world of England as it moved before his eyes.

In other words, he wrote at first hand, and describes with the vividness of one who images anew for himself that which his eyes have seen and his ears have heard. He writes as one who recalls his own impressions, not as one who remembers the words of another.

Yet in using contemporary events, Shakespeare did not make the mistake of copying them literally. He seems to analyze them, getting at the human principles that underlie the events and then making the broad general principles the basis upon which to construct his dramas.

Thus at about the time of the appearance of "The Merchant of Venice," a

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certain Jewish physician to the Queen, one Roderigo Lopez, was hanged for complicity in a plot to poison the Queen and Antonio Perez, a Spanish refugee from the persecution of the bigoted Philip the Second of Spain. It is believed that Shakespeare's play was an attempt to take advantage of the feeling roused against the Jews by this incident; and yet, although the story of the attempted poisoning might have been easily made the plot for a drama, the "Merchant of Venice" is based upon events taken from an Italian novel, two stories of the "Gesta Romanorum," and from more than one old play. This choice of incidents may be taken as an indication that Shakespeare was called upon to rewrite scenes of the old plays and had then constructed from all the available materials the marvelous drama known to us.

Lopez was hanged early in June, 1594, and "The Venetian Comedy," as it was then called, was produced by Manager

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Henslowe at the Rose Theatre on August 25, of the same year. The play as we have it was revised at a later date, but seems little changed in its main features.

We should hardly think of it as a "comedy," but must remember that the word is used to mean a play containing humorous incidents and not ending with the death of the main characters. Besides there is much evidence to show that Shylock was long played by comedians, and considered a fun-maker. Indeed, there was in old times so ingrained a hatred of the Jewish money-lender that there could be in an Elizabethan audience but little sympathy for the old man's troubles. Even to-day, a fair-minded reader of the play can hardly say that the bloodthirsty old usurer deserves any compassion. He was a flinty-hearted scoundrel who plotted murder and would have butchered Antonio with his own hand if Portia's shrewdness had not outwitted his malice.

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The character of Jessica shows that Shakespeare believed he could offer to his audience an attractive character of the Jewish race, and relieves him of the accusation that he maltreated Shylock through racial prejudice.

What the poet rather than the dramatist added to the play are the exquisite womanliness of Portia and her foil, mischievous Nerissa, the wonderful romantic beauty of the casket-scene, the elevated treatment and tragic development of the trial-scene, and of course those embellishments of the imagination to which no other adjective can be fitted than "Shakespearean," — those lines that comfort the soul as only great poetry can, and that add new phrases to the language by their exquisite fitness and fullness — such bits of perfection as "when mercy seasons justice," or "a Daniel come to judgment," or "sit like his grandsire carved in alabaster."

The "Merchant of Venice" is deserved-

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ly one of the most frequently read and acted of the plays. It has a richness of quality, a versatility of merit that makes it equally delightful to the reader or the theatrical audience, and some analysis of the play will help us to understand the genius of the young dramatist of thirty years.

CHAPTER X

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE — SHAKESPEARE PROSPEROUS — HE BUYS NEW PLACE

There is always doubt about the dates of the Shakespeare plays, and it is best for us to be satisfied with putting them into a few large groups, as Dowden has done. This shows a general agreement in plan of treatment. Thus we have seen the dramatist already at work making over old plays, and then trying his hand in the romantic style ("Love's Labor's Lost"), in the classic style ("Comedy of Errors"), in comedies of real life and pure fancy ("Two Gentlemen of Verona" and "Midsummer Night's Dream") and then in tragedy of the Marlowe, that is, the vio-

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lent, school ("Richard III."). From this he rises to the poetical tragedy ("Romeo and Juliet") and the poetical comedy ("Merchant of Venice"). As the last-named play is so eminently popular, let us briefly discuss it.

The story of the Venetian merchant and usurer is, it is true, not entirely different in subject from Marlowe's "Jew of Malta"; but the treatment is inspired by Shakespeare's breadth of human sympathy and bears little relation to the view taken by Marlowe.

As Mr. Mabie puts it, "Marlowe's Jew is a monster; Shakespeare's Jew is a man misshapen by the hands of those who feed his avarice." Charles Lamb says of Marlowe's character, "Barabas is a mere monster brought in with a large painted nose to please the rabble. He kills in sport, poisons, whole nunneries, invents infernal machines." Let us hear how Marlowe makes this Jew speak:

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“ Who hateth me but for my happiness ?
Or who is honored now but for his wealth ?
Rather had I, a Jew, be hated thus,
Than pitied in a Christian poverty :
For I can see no fruits in all their faith,
But malice, falsehood, and excessive pride,
Which, methinks, fits not [with] their profession.
Haply some hopeless man hath conscience,
And for his conscience lives in beggary.”

The words do not sound like the speech of a human being; they are mere words, however skillfully chosen and grouped. Shylock has humanity even in his suffering and malice; his brutal selfishness is understandable as the result of hatred and persecution. Yet careful consideration of the words spoken by Shylock will prove that he deserves no sympathy, and that the feeling of pity we have for him is due to the art of great actors rather than to anything Shakespeare created in the character. Let us examine his words:

He refuses to eat, drink, or pray with Christians; he hates Antonio simply for being a Christian, and for interfering with

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his money-lending; he lies hypocritically, saying he would be friends with Antonio; he exacts the bond "in sport"; pretends he will not enforce it. Jessica says his "house is hell," and admits she is ashamed to be his child. He forbids Jessica even to look at the maskers; and when she is fled, she is less to him than his jewels and ducats. He will not listen to Antonio's pleadings, and in the trial-scene, he shows that even avarice yields before his bloodthirsty longing to butcher unfortunate Antonio with his own hand.

Defeated, he begs favors, tries to save what he can, and when he loses his property wilts into despair, and turns sick, sneaking out of court after promising to turn Christian.

There is nothing heroic, nothing respectable in the character. He has nothing of the fortitude, the pride, the self-reliance of the Hebrew race. He has no self-sacrificing loyalty to his religion or his blood.

Why should he be considered other than an enemy of mankind?

And yet in the hands of Henry Irving stress is so skillfully laid upon Shylock's claim to common humanity, his apparent seeking of strict justice in enforcing the bond (made in "sport"!), his grief for the loss of his daughter — everything that can excite pity, that the play becomes a tragedy save that Shylock has not courage to die.

As already noted, old actors tried to make Shylock comic, which they could do because Elizabeth's subjects had not the slightest sympathy with the Jews, deeming persecution of them almost a Christian duty, and considering them as conscienceless outlaws.

Of the other characters, Portia alone is great. Her wit, her learning, her feminine charm, retained despite her independence of spirit, are the characteristics of the great women of the Italian renaissance, and

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a woman student of the play, Elizabeth Cavazza, has cited a number of examples from history to prove that Portia may have been drawn from more than one daughter of Italy learned in law. In particular she names Cassandra Fedele, a Venetian lady whose “profound knowledge of philosophy, Greek, and Latin astonished the severe doctors of the University of Padua.”

But the fair Portia’s learning is as nothing compared to her wit, using the word in its old sense. She dominates every scene in which she appears, speaking with a plain incisiveness that shows her mind as clear and sharp-edged as a diamond. To appreciate this, compare her speeches with those of Beatrice, or Rosalind; even when Portia is most playful, she speaks in sentences as exact as Euclid’s, demonstrating her jokes. If she be compared with Juliet, it is hard to imagine the two created by the same mind, even remembering that

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one was designed to be the victim of a tragedy, the other to be the dominating personality in a comedy. One has the timidity of youth and inexperience, the other the serenity of a womanhood used to power and place, the confidence born of prosperity.

The play is too well known to permit comment on its great scenes, the Casket Scene and that of the Trial; or mention of its over-quoted passages, Shylock's recital of Antonio's insults, Bassanio's and Portia's speeches before the caskets, the pleas in the trial and Portia's appeal for mercy — all are too familiar, so familiar that one might wish a draught of Lethe that all might be enjoyed anew.

The adverse criticisms upon "The Merchant of Venice" are theoretical; practically, the play either for the stage or the reader has few rivals, and those few are from the same source.

It is thought that the play had been

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carefully revised when first published, in 1600, and that the earliest form is the one spoken of in the diary of Henslowe, the manager, by the name "The Veneson Comedy." This was acted in August, 1594, at the Rose Theatre, which was in Southwark and not far away from Chaucer's Tabard Inn. This same theatre, two years before, had enjoyed a most prosperous season because of the "Three Parts of Henry VI.," the Londoners thronging to see the heroism and tragical death of Talbot until, as Nash, himself a successful playwright, tells us, "his bones have been new embalmed with the tears of ten thousand spectators, at least."

Possibly this was the beginning of Shakespeare's assured popularity with the audiences of his time, for we see evidences of prosperity coming in an increasing flood, and also find by the references made to him that he was gaining reputation with those whose judgments were based upon

other grounds than success in the theatres, for he was beginning to be cited by poets and critics as one whose work redounded to the glory of England — Drayton, Southwell, possibly Edmund Spenser, and John Weever being among the contemporary poets who had words of praise for the new poet and dramatist. These literary men naturally paid more attention to the poems than to the plays, for play-writing was hardly as yet considered comparable with poesy.

Shakespeare's income is difficult to estimate, though every attempt has been made. Old accounts have been ransacked in order to find what was paid for plays, with the result of fixing their price at from £6 to £11. In order to find the value of these sums in our own day, it is necessary to multiply them by eight (according to Sidney Lee) which would give the author from \$250 to \$400 as the price of each drama. Besides this, it was the custom to allow act-

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ors to share in the profits, and so one who, like Shakespeare, was both dramatist and actor, would receive a considerable share of the returns from pieces as successful as his chronicle plays of the fortunes of "Henry VI." That he was wealthy when at the height of his career we know from the evident change in his fortunes, shown by some occurrences which connect the poet again with Stratford.

In 1596, when "Romeo and Juliet" appeared on the London stage with great success, it is believed that Shakespeare was called to Stratford by the death of his son Hamnet, at the age of eleven; and this year also died Henry Shakespeare and his wife of Snitterfield, the poet's uncle and aunt.

It was in this year that an application was made by Shakespeare's father for a coat-of-arms, though the arms were not granted until three years later, and then with an omission of the Arden arms, which the College of Heralds had evidently in-

sisted upon or advised. In this year also there was record of a sale of land by Shakespeare's father, and an attempt to regain the Ashbies estate that had been pledged for money lent to the poet's father eighteen years before; and after this date it is noticeable that there is no further record of suits against the father to recover debts, which is taken as a proof that the son's success in London enabled him to come to the rescue of his relatives in Stratford.

The growing popularity of the drama in Elizabeth's reign can be traced by the history of the theatres. In 1575 there was but one, called *the Theatre*, in the open fields outside of the city limits to the north; then came the second, called "The Curtain," from the name of the field upon which it was erected, in the same neighborhood; later we see houses put up also to the south of the city, across London Bridge, the Rose, the Hope, and the Swan,

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all outside the city limits, because the aldermen would not suffer the building of such places within their jurisdiction. The Blackfriars Theatre was the first to rise inside the city walls, but this found place only because it stood upon land that was privileged — the land set apart for the churchmen whose name it bore.

To James Burbage, the actor and manager, was due this growth of the theatrical profession, and its establishment as a recognized form of public amusement. Against the opposition of the city authorities, the Puritan preachers and laymen, and the attacks of other enemies ("reformed" actors and moralists) the theatre had been raised from vagabondage to respectability, and this had taken place within Shakespeare's lifetime, and from his earliest actor-days, he had been most associated with Burbage and his companies. The building of the Blackfriars Theatre enabled performances to be given under a roof, and

thus lengthened the theatrical season into the winter, giving occupation to actors throughout the year and thereby still more tending to constitute theirs a self-supporting profession.

No doubt it was the countenance of Lord Leicester, Robert Dudley, that first secured a footing for the company to which Shakespeare was attached; but the start once given, they made themselves so popular that they brought the whole dramatic profession into favor, until, before the death of Elizabeth, there were existing sixteen or eighteen theatres in London.

We must therefore look upon Shakespeare, in the years 1596, 1597, 1598, when he was from 32 to 34 years old, as well established in a paying profession, and taking steps to enjoy his prosperity. Besides the attempt to secure a coat-of-arms, we find him buying land in Stratford — the “New Place,” for which he paid £60, a value of about \$2,400 in our money. This proves

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not only his rise in the world but also his intention to make his home of retirement in his native town. If he had entirely cut himself off from his old associations, and had remained in London since his first arrival, it does not seem likely he would have selected Stratford for his home on retiring from London. “New Place” was a house and grounds in the centre of the town, probably in bad condition when bought, for the price paid is thought to be low, and there is a record that the house was dilapidated in 1549, was in chancery for some years, and was sold or conveyed to help pay certain heavy legacies — all of which makes it reasonable to suppose the house remained neglected. It was sold in 1567 for £40 to the family that held it until Shakespeare’s purchase thirty years later, and the small advance in price does not show that any great improvements were made by these owners.

That Shakespeare had at least his nom-

inal home in New Place in 1597 appears from his being assessed for this property and also recorded as being in possession of a certain amount of corn, at a time when famine threatened and an inventory was taken, so that the authorities might know what resources were available. Though this does not prove Shakespeare's residence in Stratford, the large amount of corn on hand, ten quarters, would seem to indicate that the house was occupied in 1598 when the list was made up.

In the same year, tradition would show visits to London, for in the earliest life of the poet, Rowe's, we find him credited with using his influence to save from rejection by the theatre the play "Every Man in his Humor," by the then unknown Ben Jonson, and thus to give Jonson his start in life. In this play Shakespeare is said to have taken the part of "Knowell," and some think the portrait prefixed to the First Folio shows him in this character. We also

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find Shakespeare written to by Richard Quiney, father of Thomas, who married Judith Shakespeare, for a loan of £30 upon security — this being the only existing letter to the poet. No other event of 1598 is recorded except the purchase of stone to repair New Place. But these are enough to show Shakespeare as a man who had come up in the world, and was considered well-to-do. Sidney Lee, after a careful calculation of all known resources thinks his income from plays and theatrical returns must have been about \$5,000 a year, which might well seem large to the quiet burghers of Stratford.

But there was also a vague local tradition in the town that the quick prosperity of their runaway townsman was due to a present from the Earl of Southampton, who was reported to have given Shakespeare £1,000 "to carry through a purchase he had a mind to." It is believed that the sum is exaggerated, but there may have

been some gift, possibly in recognition of the dedications of "Venus and Adonis," and "The Rape of Lucrece," which, published in 1593 and 1594, were put out in later editions, "Venus" twice and "Lucrece" once by the end of 1598, and the final transfer of "New Place" was not completed for several years after the first contract.

It was in 1598 that Meres published in his "Tamia" or "Wits' Treasury" the list of Shakespeare's works up to that time, a list that has been of the greatest assistance in fixing the dates of the pieces mentioned. The passage may be found quoted in every life of the poet; and the important thing to be noted here is the omitting of "Henry VI.," and the inclusion of "Titus Andronicus," to which too much importance is often given. Meres may have named the pieces his critical judgment approved, and omitted "Henry VI." as inferior to those named of the historical series, or he may

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not have seen it performed, since it was the least Shakespearean of all the historical series, and the Third Part was the only play of Shakespeare's performed by another than his own company. In fact, the mere omitting of "Henry VI." from the list is of little moment as an argument against all that is claimed — Shakespeare's collaboration in its writing.

We are so eager to secure evidence in regard to the dramatist and his life that we are in danger of forgetting that the contemporary notices of him were written without any suspicion of the importance the future would give to every word and phrase. As the writers were uncritical, what they say should be interpreted with common sense. Thus, in naming Shakespeare's plays, Meres would be likely to accept without question whatever was publicly assigned to him. The list is most important as a proof that the plays named were in existence at the time.

CHAPTER XI

SHAKESPEARE IN HIS PROSPERITY

Shakespeare's growing confidence in his own powers is exhibited in the plays written during this time of prosperity. He produced not long before this the two long parts, really making one play, of "Henry IV.," which show a disposition to do away with the long established distinction between a drama all tragedy and one all comedy. "Henry IV." unites both comic and tragic elements, passing at will from one to another, treating both with assured power. Based upon the old play "The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth," a comparison shows Shakespeare transmuting the lead of a dull drama into golden humor, poetry, and pathos.

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Taking little more than hints from the characters, he has put into each of them life and power. The roistering Prince has become the fascinating Prince Hal to whom the most rigid moralist must grant pardon; Sir John Oldcastle has become the fat Knight Falstaff, one of the few great masterpieces of character-drawing in literature. But these two so predominate that we give to the other personages of the play hardly the attention rightly due them; the troubles of King Henry are forgotten in the pranks of his madcap son and the jests of Sir John. It seems as if Shakespeare, relieved from money anxieties, had been in such a frame of mind that he was more attracted by the humorous opportunities given by the escapades of the wild young slip of royalty than by the pathetic situation of the usurping father. Certainly, of all the amusing figures Shakespeare has created Falstaff has by common consent been considered the greatest. And what a triumph of art it is

to win our affection for this truly despicable character! He is made up of characteristics universally despised. He is a liar, a braggart, a frequenter of low taverns. He is a coward and a cheat. He lacks all human sympathy for the poor wretches whom he picks up to be “ food for powder.” He can lay no claim to any quality worthy of our respect; and yet by his good-fellowship, his wit, his humor of mere speech, he makes himself welcome to us, and we can hardly wonder that Prince Hal loved his company.

The Prince himself is less black as Shakespeare painted him than he is in the old play; in fact, the careful reader will see that Shakespeare never lets the reckless young fellow pass the line dividing mischief from crime.

The First Part of Henry IV. shows the King busied in affairs of state, while the Prince is devising a practical joke at Falstaff's expense, pretending to join in a robbery and robbing the robbers. Thus we

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have great affairs brought into sharp contrast with the most frivolous, and Hotspur, the valiant young warrior, is introduced to make the careless idle Prince seem the more blameworthy for his indifference. But when Hotspur's hostility leads him to rebellion, Prince Henry becomes a man, putting away childish things, and makes good his promise to overcome the more punctilious Hotspur. Thus the young Prince regains the King's respect, and begins the glorious career that made him so long a popular idol. As Prince Henry rises, Falstaff falls when brought to the test by great events; and the Second Part carries Prince Henry to the throne, dismissing Falstaff to disgraceful retirement, in a scene of marvelous power and pathos.

The warfare of the drama of Henry IV. makes only a background for the bringing out of the figure of the Prince. He is the hero both of the tragedy and the comedy; and one feels that the fortunes of this

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Harry of England should make one grand trilogy, a great play in three parts, "Henry V." completing the action of the two earlier and finishing the portraiture of him whom, we can not doubt, Shakespeare loved most of his romantic heroes. Even the part of "Richard III." offers no greater scope to the actor's powers, and Richard is more a villain than a hero, and has no lighter moods to win the affection of audiences or readers.

"Henry V." was written, it is believed, in 1599; for it contains, as the Chorus to Act V., lines referring to the absence of the Earl of Essex in Ireland, and the expedition began and ended in that year. It follows close upon the previous plays, and in its spirit has all the dash and power of the young king. The choruses introducing the acts are so marvelous in their picturesque imaginings that critics have been thankful the lack of scene-setting made this exquisite poetry necessary. We might well barter

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many a square acre of painted canvas for a few lines like these :

“ Suppose that you have seen
The well-appointed king at Hampton pier
Embark his royalty ; and his brave fleet
With silken streamers the young Phœbus fanning.
Play with your fancies ; and in them behold
Upon the hempen tackle, ship-boys climbing :
Hear the shrill whistle that doth order give
To sounds confused : Behold the threaden sails,
Borne with the invisible and creeping wind
Draw the huge bottoms through the furrowed sea,
Breasting the lofty surge.”

And intertwined with passages of the most elevated poetry, are such delicious comedies as the English lesson of the Princess Katharine, King Henry’s midnight visit to his soldiers’ camp, and Fluellen’s forcing the leek on Pistol; such wonderful pieces of eloquence as Henry’s address before the battle, such dainty bits as that upon the honey-bees in Act I. In this play again we feel ourselves in the presence of an intellect that is superabundant, of a spirit that is indomitable, an imagination whose reach

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is unparalleled, and we feel certain that when it was written the author was in the full tide of worldly success.

To the reader who desires to know the England of Shakespeare's time no plays are more valuable than these about Henry IV. and Henry V. They truly depict the life of the time so far as their scope allows. They give us glimpses into the court, the camp, the grove; we see the houses of the great, houses that were still castles of defense against king or people in turn; we see the taverns where the common people reveled; we walk in the London streets, or march with Falstaff's ragged regiment along the roads where there is linen to be stolen from every hedge; we see the army in tents or on the battlefield, the fleet sailing with painted sails and floating pennons across the chopping channel; we become acquainted with churchmen, soldiers, tapsters, noble ladies, and all the vagabondage of London slums; with dandy noblemen and

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with patriotic or rebellious statesmen. Their trappings may be labeled of earlier date, but their ways and manners are of the time of Good Queen Bess. The extravagant speeches, the abundant humor, the eloquence, the confidence against the world in arms, are those of the Englishmen who have become aware that their little island may stand against the world in arms, and that in her resources they have an inexhaustible purse of Fortunatus.

It is customary to place "The Merry Wives of Windsor" in this group of plays. And yet one may detect in the faint praise and the excuses made by the critics, a consciousness that the prose-comedy of Sir John Falstaff and the Merry Wives is far inferior to its fellows. This is explained by the tradition that Queen Elizabeth was so delighted with the humors of old Sir John that she commanded the dramatist to write a play showing him in love, and that in obedience to her behest Shakespeare in

two weeks produced this prose piece. Rowe, the poet's first biographer, tells of the Queen's command, and John Dennis, who wrote in 1702, reports the time of its composition. But Henry Morley gives no value to either tradition, considering both baseless gossip, and argues forcibly that the play does not show Falstaff in love. Dowden admits that it is impossible to make out exact relations between these characters and those by the same names in the historical plays.

In short, is it too sceptical to doubt that Shakespeare wrote the play at all? Falstaff here is what Dowden calls him — “fatuous.” There is no poetry in it. “Its fun is elementary.” “It is a comedy that runs continually into broad farce.” “It deals with contemporaneous middle-class people in whom the writer shows very little interest. . . . Moreover the play, although admirable in construction is below the level of Shakespeare's work of this

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period in intellectual quality, and lacks those inimitable touches of humor and poetry which are the ineffaceable marks of his genius when it is working freely and spontaneously."

Such are some of the comments of critics.

Why, it may be asked, did not Shakespeare work "freely and spontaneously"? He had been for a dozen years adapting, revising and recreating plays to suit a popular demand. In the "Merchant of Venice" we are practically sure that he wrote to catch a wave of current interest, and yet it is Shakespearean throughout. When asked by the Queen, the greatest influence then in England, to write a play especially to please her, when thus flattered by the supreme proof of his success, we are asked to excuse a weak result because he was to write by order a sequel to a former play.

It will not do of course to deny Homer his nodding, nor to ask that every Shake-

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speare play be a masterpiece; but where Shakespeare shows least strength (it is commonly admitted) is in the making of plots. And it is precisely in plot and construction that this play is strongest.

Where it fails is where Shakespeare never fails — in poetry, in force, in strength of characterization, in wealth of ornament. Upon the stage, clever actors can make much of the excellent situations presented in the comedy.

There are plenty of good situations, of dramatic points. But to the reader who comes directly from the Falstaff of Henry IV. to the Falstaff of the "Merry Wives," it is apparent that we are in the presence of another spirit, or that the hand of his creator has for the time lost its cunning. The whole play has hardly a Shakespearean line. The quotations from its text are for the most part proverbial sayings that may well have been rather the wisdom of many than the wit of one, and there is an almost

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complete lack of those passages that mark the other plays as coming from no other mind than Shakespeare's.

For further proof, read the "Taming of the Shrew," a play of such unevenness of excellence that the best opinions credit Shakespeare only with additions and revisions to improve the older play, "The Taming of a Shrew," published in 1594. He has apparently devoted himself mainly to improving those scenes in which Katharina, Petruchio, and Grumio appear. And it is these we must compare with the humor of "The Merry Wives," and in them we shall find the playful, lightsome, poetical humor lacking in the other play. Petruchio's longer speeches are full of it, especially where he has dragged the forlorn Katharina to his disorderly stronghold, and then out-Herods Herod with his freakish anger.

But, above all else, consider Katharina's exquisite speech beginning:

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“ Fie, fie! unknot that threatening unkind brow,
And dart not scornful glances from those eyes,
To wound thy lord, thy king, thy governor.”

This is the pen that wrote “Hamlet,” “Lear,” “Macbeth” and “As You Like It.” What is there in “The Merry Wives of Windsor” that tastes of such a quality?

One more group of three comedies, considered by Dowden as exhibiting the poet’s more refined and romantic humor, belongs to that part of his life that ends with the sixteenth century, and then follows a period distinguished by greater seriousness of purpose, and more sombre views of life. Exactly what made the change in Shakespeare’s method of treatment is disputed, but for a time his mind seemed to be delving deep below the surface of life, and to assume a more serious cast.

CHAPTER XII

SHAKESPEARE'S MOST ACTIVE YEARS

Of Shakespeare's time, three centuries ago, we possess many actual relics. Buildings in which his plays were given still stand. Paintings, including the marvelously correct portraits by Holbein, give us exact ideas of the faces and costumes of the personages and the people. We have minor relics of personal use, such as swords, pipes, and books, which were handled by Elizabethan hands. We have much of the literature that was read, and public documents in plenty, and can thus reconstruct much of the life of the day. But here and there there are gaps in our knowledge. It is as if we came upon illegible portions in an old and tattered manuscript, or now and

then discovered a page to be missing, a page that may have contained matters of vital moment.

What is lacking can never be with certainty supplied. While there are buildings dating from before those days, the actual England as a whole, is gone beyond recovery. London, Canterbury, Chester, are other than they were. The great wastes of rural England, the fields, forests, marshes : the roads, the brooks, the rivers, are changed by the conversion of coal into heat, heat into power, and power into manufactures. Where pack-horses trudged, locomotives shoot past; where wind- or water-mills turned lazily, steam-engines and dynamos drive at furious speed. All labor has been raised to a higher efficiency, and material for that labor has been brought into use with unexampled rapidity. These transformations did more to change the face of England in a hundred years than it had formerly been changed in thrice or five

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times as many. Chaucer or Wycliffe or the Black Prince would have been less strange to Shakespeare's neighbors, than Washington or Franklin would be to ours.

And great as have been the changes in material things, the changes in ways of thinking have been even more complete. Our attitudes of mind toward most subjects would be wholly new to an Elizabethan. His ideas of government, of religion, of philosophy, of social customs are not ours. His attitude toward the natural world, toward other human beings, toward animals would be hard to understand except by long study. His estimates of the relative importance of many matters would disagree widely with our judgments after three hundred years. In spite of certain fundamental likenesses, human nature does change from age to age; and if we find Shakespeare's plays not alien to our own ideals in their broader characteristics, it is because he made the greater truths predominate

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over the less permanent ideas and prejudices of his race, his country, and his century.

Some of the accepted notions of the reign of Elizabeth have influenced his work, and to our taste have detracted from its merit. He introduced certain conventional characters, such as the comic old men and the clowns or fools. He yielded to the taste for verbal quibbling and to our thinking introduced far too many facile puns and childish word-plays. He wrote with an eye to the prejudices of his audiences, and left preaching to the pulpit. He had little sympathy with those who combated the abuses of his times, or else misjudged their purposes and characters with a truly English conservatism. In short, he was of his own time, though, without doubt, "for all time" as his eulogy says.

All this can be read from his career. He did not at once manifest the power and breadth of his genius, but took his place among his fellow playwrights, and worked

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in harness with them until he had learned all they could teach him. When he was conscious of greater power, he simply carried the work further, departing from old ways only as they hampered him, and breaking out new paths as he felt able to go beyond the territory already occupied, and as he found that his audiences would follow his excursions into new fields.

Thus, as we learn more exactly the chronology and succession of his plays, we may follow the growth of the greatest mind in literature. Nor is it presumptuous, as some critics have said, for us to arrange the plays in order of merit, finding in earlier work imperfections that do not exist in his best periods; for it is by Shakespeare inspired that we judge Shakespeare uninspired, and by his masterpieces we learn the shortcomings of work more faulty from the same hand. We must admit that he soon surpassed all lesser geniuses, and forbade comparison save with his own better hours.

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There is room for much gradation between "Richard III." and "King Lear"; more between "Two Gentlemen of Verona," and "As You Like It." With the end of the fifteenth century, it is agreed that we pass from one period of Shakespeare's mental life into another. From whatever cause, there is a change from the lighter and more tolerant view of life shown in the "refined comedies," as critics term "Much Ado About Nothing," "As You Like It," and "Twelfth Night," to a deeper and more saddened attitude seen not only in the tragedies but even in the comedies produced between 1600 and 1608. And yet there is nothing in Shakespeare's fortunes that would seem an adequate cause for misanthropy or cynicism. It is true that the Earl of Essex and Shakespeare's patron Southampton met with ill-fortune in 1599; and that their expedition into Ireland to suppress a rebellious rising had brought them only disgrace contrary to the expec-

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tation expressed by Shakespeare in the Prologue to Act V. of Henry V. in these often quoted lines :

“ Were now the general of our gracious empress—
As in good time he may—from Ireland coming,
Bringing rebellion broached on his sword,
How many would the peaceful city quit
To welcome him ! ”

But Essex and Southampton were not yet plotting treason, and Shakespeare hardly needed patronage. The theatrical business upon which his future depended seemed in a flourishing state. It was the year of the building of the “Globe Theatre” on the Bank-side; and the sons of Burbage, having torn down the old Theatre, the first in existence, were using the materials for this new enterprise.

This new theatre, the “Globe,” so called from its sign, a figure of Atlas with the world on his shoulders, was a fine structure, and must have interested Shakespeare in his three capacities of playwright, actor,

and shareholder. Indeed, as a friend of the Burbages, there was plenty in the removal of the old building at Shoreditch to interest him; for there was a riot over the matter resulting in a lawsuit between the owner of the land and the Burbage party, holders of an expired lease. The landlord accuses them of riotously assembling, armed with "swords, daggers, bills, axes and such like," and in an "outrageous and forcible manner" pulling down the Theatre.

Between December and the end of January, 1599, the materials were taken to the new site across the Thames, and the Globe was built — a rounding building, which old pictures show as octagonal or hexagonal, it is difficult to tell which. Shakespeare's "Henry V." in the opening chorus speaks of it as "this wooden O." The outside shows three rows of windows, too high for little wanton boys to crawl into. On the top are three small roofed structures, from the highest of which floats the flag that was

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hoisted during performances. The ownership was divided into sixteen shares of which Shakespeare may have held two, an eighth interest. About 2,000 could be accommodated with places, and the receipts from the theatre may have brought Shakespeare more than £500 a year. In "Hamlet" we see a reference to "a fellowship in a cry of players" spoken of as yielding a support (Act III., Sc. II., 290-291). Among the earliest plays here presented were "Henry V." and Ben Jonson's "Every Man in his Humor," both referring in their text to the new theatre.

Another sign that Shakespeare was not depressed by ill-fortune is the renewal of the application for a coat-of-arms, this time for recognition of arms already used, and permission to impale the Arden arms. The result is not clearly stated, but the Shakespeare arms were used by the poet, without those of Arden, and appear on his tomb in Stratford, as follows: "Gold, on a bend

sable, a spear of the first, and for crest a falcon, his wings displayed, argent, standing on a wreath of his colors, supporting a spear, gold, steeled as aforesaid. The old-French motto, "Non sanz droict," means "Not without right." Since coats-of-arms seem to have been often granted without close inquiry except as to the ability to support them by a decent establishment, the main interest we have in the Shakespeare coat is its decorative use on editions of his works, or in theatres. At all events the arms are of little importance as a proof of descent, though they may be thought an evidence of prosperity.

In this same year appeared a little book, "The Passionate Pilgrim," ascribed on the title-page to Shakespeare, containing two of his sonnets and other verses by various hands. Thomas Heywood was a poet of the time, and he says that because of Shakespeare's objection to this unauthorized use of his name it was removed; and copies of

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the book without the name exist. But there is no proof which copies, the signed or unsigned, first appeared, so it is not certain that Heywood's remark is true. At all events, we know that Shakespeare's name was used by many printers to give value to plays written by others; and if he objected only when William Jaggard printed the "Passionate Pilgrim" under his name, it may show he cared more for his reputation as poet than as dramatic author. Also in the last part of 1599, some English actors made a tour into Scotland, playing before the King, but we do not know that Shakespeare was with them, and critics of "Macbeth" find him making geographical errors.

The three comedies that are put down to this time, "Much Ado About Nothing," "As You Like It," and "Twelfth Night," are recognized as marking the end of the period of less serious work. In these, there is a spirit of enjoyment, a brightness of

touch, and an irresponsibility that does not reappear for nearly ten years. In "Much Ado About Nothing" we have Benedick and Beatrice, the gentleman and lady jesters of refinement (though they have a liberty of tongue that would not be tolerated in the present day), and each shows a bravery and loyalty that redeems the character from frivolity. Dogberry and Verges, blundering clowns with farcical attributes, are the jesters from the other end of the social scale. Excepting these four, the personages of the drama are not striking; and the play does not touch one deeply until Hero's suffering under the false accusation gives Shakespeare a theme worthy of him.

It must not be forgotten that the manners and customs of the characters in these comedies are really English, though they apparently deal with the fortunes of foreigners, and may include such features of foreign life as were imbedded in the sources

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from which the dramatist drew the material upon which he worked. Thus in "Much Ado About Nothing," as one seeks for information on the life of the times, there will be found a reference to their only method of advertising, the posting of bills in public places; to the practice of archery; to the book of jests known as "The Hundred Merry Tales"; to the building of temporary shelters in the fields for husbandmen; to the frequency of hair-dyeing; to the use of the stalking-horse by huntsmen; to the hanging of epitaphs upon tombs and in public places; to the fashion of love-locks.

And in the absurdities of the ancient watchmen we find a satirical and yet life-like picture of the makeshift police who were supposed to keep in check the mad blades of Elizabeth's unruly towns and cities.

These references bring to us a further realization of the changes that have separated

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modern England from the land of our forefathers.

“As You Like It” is of finer quality throughout, and justifies its greater popularity by richer humor, greater wealth of character, a more romantic setting. Rosalind, Jaques, Orlando, and Celia make up a quartet of fascinating comedy and immortal interest, and their interchange of wit or pleasant fooling is nowhere to be matched. The plot is full of small knots for unraveling and the conclusion satisfies. It is the dramatizing of a novel, or, rather the creating anew of a story Shakespeare took from one of those long-winded, yet quaint and pleasing romances in which we still try to be interested when we find them interspersed in “Don Quixote.” Taking the dry skeleton of the plot, the dramatist identifies his poetic soul with each character in turn, reading and interpreting its thoughts and dreams, and giving them expression.

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The novel appeared in 1590, and the play is thought to have been written eight or nine years later, at or about the time Shakespeare was writing "Henry V.," and when the Globe Theatre was being made ready — that is, at the height of his London career, and when he was in the midst of city-life.

Yet we must not find this woodland romance alien to the author's life. London then had not lost all savor of the country. There were within its limits many noted gardens, and many streets now encased in stone were then little more than country lanes decked with flowers and bordered with vines; the banks of the Thames had not yet ceased to be the home of blossoming plants. Just outside the city were still open fields to remind the Londoner of country sights and sounds. A recent writer in the "Pall Mall Magazine," in reviewing the "Herbal of John Gerard," says, "To Gerard we owe a picture of London's

gardens. From his book we can gather what manner of city Shakespeare lived in; we can picture to ourselves the fair gardens and fruitful orchards in which the citizens delighted, and can realize that the London of that day was truly a ‘Garden City’.”

It was thus natural that the public of the time should still live close to nature, and that we should find in the writings of the time a wealth of allusion to flowers, trees, and all outdoors.

Another thing to be borne in mind when reading “*As You Like It*,” is the tradition that Shakespeare’s brother in old age described him as taking the part of an aged man with a long beard, “so weak and drooping that he was forced to be supported and carried by another person to a table, at which he was seated among some company who were eating, and one of them sang a song.” This vague description well fits the last part of Act II., Scene VII., where *Orlando* brings old *Adam* to the

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Duke's table just before the singing of "Blow, blow, thou winter wind," and demands food for him.

As the time of the play is unfixed, the period fitting nearly any feudal period before Shakespeare in the Kingdom of France, there are few lines that give light upon usages of English life. We are told of washing clothes by beating them with a batlet, as is still done in old-fashioned lands; we learn of the use of "counters" in reckoning; of the jogging ride of "butter-women to market"; of the designs, such as the Seven Ages of Man, accompanied by sententious legends, on the "painted cloths" that covered walls; of the treatises regulating the "quarrel" or duello, and others giving directions for behavior at table and in the houses of the nobility; and through a phrase speaking of "Gargantua" we are reminded of the chap-books that told in coarse print and rude woodcuts the popular stories of the

time, for Rabelais had not yet appeared in English.

The quintain for jousting — the wooden figure of a fierce Turk that revolved if unskillfully struck, and whacked the awkward squire with a wooden sword — was still in use; and the Venetian gondola was still a feature in the tales of travelers to Italy.

But the greatest charm of the play is the fresh breath of the forests that yet stood in rural England; and as Schlegel said, “Whoever affects to be displeased, if in this romantic forest the ceremonial of dramatic art is not duly observed, ought in justice to be delivered over to the wise fool, to be led gently out of it to some prosaical region.”

The “Forest of Arden” is to our thought what Arcadia was to the Greek — the land of idyllic love and natural beauty, the region that beckons when “the world is too much with us.”

“Twelfth Night” is usually ascribed to

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the beginning of the seventeenth century, and so marks in comedy the transition to the more serious plays that are grouped as the work of Shakespeare's least serenity, though it really belongs in likeness with the two already named, and has much of the same spirit.

It is, in its plot, one of the comedies of mistaken identity, and in some situations repeats those of "Two Gentlemen of Verona"; but there is in this play a wealth of situation and a drollery of happenings that enrich it both for stage and study, and the mistakes of identity and mistaking of sex in disguise are but stock properties of the theatre, the more useful for being well known and often used. One delightful feature of "Twelfth Night" is the abundance of old songs, riddles, quips, and proverbial speeches, which are only to be appreciated by the ample notes upon the play, such as those in Staunton's edition, since Shakespeare makes his clowns and

fools follow the fashion of their fellows in quoting only brief bits.

The date of the play is fixed by an account of its performance at the Middle Temple, February 2, 1601-1602, given in the diary of a student; and there is also reference to a "new map of the Indies," which may be one contained in a book of voyages published in 1598. Between these dates the play was probably written, being contemporary with "*As You Like It.*" It is based on Italian originals, but the best comic characters are new, and the romance is made more delicate and fine than in the Italian plays or in the stories based on them.

The title is a reminder to us of the rollicking revels that marked the celebration of the season of Twelfth Night — a time no longer so specially marked, but once having observances that were eagerly expected and enthusiastically enjoyed. It was set apart for "the visiting of friends

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and Christmas gambols," and its ceremonies were at first in honor of the Magi, for it is the day of Epiphany. The most notable of its customs was the choosing of a "king and queen" by lot, their majesties being those lucky enough to find two beans hidden in the Twelfth Night cake. The reader will find an excellent account of the celebration of Epiphany in Walsh's "Curiosities of Popular Customs," or in any treatise upon the old holidays. We know that in Shakespeare's time the observation of the holiday was general, and often included the performance of plays.

Here and there the comedy touches upon some fashion of the time. Thus it tells that the viol-da-gamba was a favorite instrument among the gallants, when every fine gentleman was an amateur of music; that a "parish top" was still provided for the amusement of English villagers when (as Richard Grant White says), "much time was spent in healthful sport, and none

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in reading foolish fiction, prurient police-reports, and the wordy bickerings of party politics"; that the eating of beef was thought harmful to the wit; that it was the custom to erect two ornamental posts before a sheriff's door, ornaments which may have stood before that of Master John Shakespeare in Stratford; and there is another reference to an insignium of office, the gold chain that was worn about the neck by a Steward.

More important is the sneer at the "Brownists," the English sect that sought separation from the English Church. The beginning of the Puritan movement that sent colonies to America is thus marked by Sir Andrew Aguecheek's scornful reference, in Act III., Scene II.

But we can refer to no more of these tiny fossils of a past age except briefly to note "The Great Bed of Ware," the "buttery-bar," the "stone-bow," and the cry "Westward Ho!" which was heard from

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the mouths of the Thames boatmen seeking custom, and must have been daily in Shakespeare's ears.

These three comedies, says Ten Brink, "transport us to an Arcadian world, amid charmingly romantic surroundings, and among a people who live — it being virtually their only concern — a life of the emotions." They mark the end of the dramatist's more playful method, and yet resemble most the latest of his plays — those written during the period named by Professor Dowden "On the Heights." To the time closed by these playful comedies he has attached the phrase "In the World," for Shakespeare was prosperous, wrote of real life, and wrote with buoyant confidence.

CHAPTER XIII

LAST YEARS IN LONDON

Although the seventeenth century dated the beginning of the more serious frame of mind in the dramatist, the records of his life for the year 1600 present him first as recovering £7 in a lawsuit from one John Clayton, not otherwise known to fame. Clayton's immortality seems not expensive, such as it is, and Shakespeare's action shows an interest in practical matters which is further confirmed by the fact that he about this time busied himself in planting an orchard in Stratford.

Some trifling indications point to increasing general prosperity in England. The Earl of Arundel is credited with introducing the use of bricks in building, and it was

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found necessary to forbid by law gentlemen from riding in those effeminate inventions, coaches, instead of going a-horseback as their fathers were wont. The more general use of vegetables is shown by the arrival of asparagus, artichokes, and cauliflowers upon English tables.

But to the student of Shakespeare the most important event of the year is the Essex rebellion, which involved Southampton in the foolish attempt to raise the people of London against Elizabeth. While the Queen made enemies by her autocratic ways and her court favoritism, the best sense of the nation knew from their experience under Mary Tudor that to bring the burning questions of religion into politics was to enter upon a time of disasters.

Naturally Essex's rebellion was an utter failure, and its authors went to the Tower. Essex lost his head and Southampton escaped only by the coming of King James to the throne. But in order to foment re-

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bellion, there had been an attempt to use the theatre and its hold upon the people. Testimony taken in regard to the uprising showed that forty shillings had been paid to the actor Augustine Phillips to play “Richard II.” at the Globe Theatre, as a sort of object-lesson in the deposing of a monarch. The play was given early in February, 1601, and apparently not only at the Globe, since Queen Elizabeth complained, as Sidney Lee shows, that this tragedy was played “forty times in open streets and houses,” with the intention of making trouble. If, as it seems, this was Shakespeare’s play, it is at least a proof of the power of his work and its hold upon the public.

And yet there was rivalry for the actors, and a rivalry they keenly felt. The boys who formed the choirs in the Royal Chapel and in the Cathedral had been accustomed to present plays now and then, and after they had hired the Blackfriars Theatre,

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their representations became so popular as to draw people from the regular performances. This gave rise to quarrels and recriminations into which we cannot enter, but they have given occasion for much writing regarding the relation of Ben Jonson and Shakespeare to the strife. Jonson championed the youthful players, and while Shakespeare is not known to have entered actively into the squabble we find in "Hamlet" an unmistakable reference to the questions, and Shakespeare's opinion on the matter.

Hamlet asks after the fortunes of the actors, and Rosencrantz in explaining why they are not "so followed," says:

"Their endeavor keeps in the wonted pace; but there is, sir, an aëry of children, little eyases that cry out on the top of question, and are most tyrannically clapped for it. These are now the fashion, and so berattle the common stages — so they call them — that many wearing rapiers are

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afraid of goose-quills, and dare scarce come thither."

Then Hamlet points out the absurdity of the rivalry between young and old players whose interests should be the same, and thus dismisses the subject without ill-humor, and with eminent good-sense. If Shakespeare spoke his own mind, it does not seem likely he had allowed himself to take any bitterness from the controversy. Exactly what part he took is not settled, but in Jonson's "Poetaster," which is based upon the fracas, he seems willing that Shakespeare should play the role of arbiter and peacemaker; while in the "Return from Parnassus" a play given at Cambridge, Shakespeare is spoken of as if he had thrown his influence against Jonson and the boy-players. Those interested must look elsewhere for the detailed arguments.

In this year Shakespeare's father died, being buried on September 8, 1601, and thus the dramatist inherited the Henley

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street house that is now regarded as his birthplace. Stratford then begins again to figure in the poet's life, for in May of the next year he appears as buyer of over a hundred acres of land near New Place, and the final legal transfer of that estate is completed. Besides, there is a purchase of a cottage and garden not far away, all showing a growing interest in the town and the purpose of making his home there upon leaving London. It may be that seeing the public running so eagerly after the child players produced upon the sensitive mind of the poet two effects. It may have shown him upon how slight a foundation his fortunes rested, and also may have incited him to the production of dramas that were beyond the powers of the youngsters.

These motives would help to explain his turning to Stratford for a permanent home and the investment of his earnings, and for the complete change of tone in his dramatic work. At all events he did turn

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his attention to acquiring real estate, and he wrote “Julius Cæsar” and “Hamlet,” while instead of light comedy we have “All’s Well That Ends Well,” “Measure for Measure,” and “Troilus and Cressida.” Dowden says, “Whatever the cause may have been, the fact seems certain that the poet now ceased to care for tales of mirth and love, for the stir and movement of history, for the pomp of war; he needed to sound with his imagination the depths of the human heart. * * * During this period, Shakespeare’s genius left the bright surface of the world, and was at work in the very heart and centre of things.”

There seems little need to search curiously for the causes of this change in the mental attitude of Shakespeare. He had reached mature manhood, was above the need of struggling for place with competitors, had, in a sense, made his fortune. It is just the time when any introspective mind would begin to ask “cui bono”?—when

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ambition would give place to a desire for rest, when speculative powers, looking forward and back, would call the whole man to account before the bar of his own conscience. All this would bring up those deep questions of which these plays of the middle period are full, and the necessities of the stage would require their embodiment in dramatic form.

By this no one means to say that Shakespeare sat himself down with finger on brow, and, gazing over the broad Thames, decided to enter upon a course of deep and deadly metaphysics. None but a priggish man would do so. But, perhaps unknown to himself, questions of this sort were most attractive to his mind at this time, and therefore received special attention in his dramatic work. Where, working over old plots or old plays, Shakespeare saw an opportunity to deal with deeper questions, he seized upon it and elaborated the lines in this direction; for, after all, it is only a

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question of more or less of this element. If his mind had not retained its humor, its wit, its exquisite taste, the change would have been shown in quality rather than in kind of work.

Public affairs also contributed to make thoughtful men sober. "The deep cleavage that was to divide the English people for many decades," says Mr. Mabie, "began to be visible." The Puritan spirit was waxing strong and tended to check the reckless gayety of the old "Merry England." Queen Elizabeth was becoming feeble, and a change in the monarchy had often been the cause of grave events in the kingdom.

If there were in addition some great misfortunes in Shakespeare's personal life, such as some interpreters would read into the unsolved puzzles presented by his Sonnets, it is not yet possible to point them out more than vaguely. He may have been deceived in love by a woman who was unworthy of affection; he may have found

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himself giving the most heartfelt friendship to one who was unfaithful to his trust.

But if the Sonnets are meant to conceal his intimate confessions, it is, as Halliwell-Phillips points out, rather odd that he should spread them broadcast among his friends — the very persons most likely to solve their riddling lines. Lee has concluded that the poet was but following the fashion of “Sonneteering” that held sway from 1591 to 1597; and says “there is no proof that he is doing more in those sonnets than producing the illusion of a personal confession.” By “those sonnets,” Mr. Lee refers to the ones expressing a sense of melancholy and remorse, and embodying the supposed personal griefs, and excepts the sonnets telling how the poet found in his dearest friend a successful rival in love. Even if we accept the Sonnets of Shakespeare as confessions, there is no agreement as to their meaning.

Certainly “All’s Well That Ends Well,”

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"Measure for Measure," and "Troilus and Cressida" have by the critics been classified as repellent and painful, as bitter and satirical; and "Julius Cæsar" and "Hamlet" turn upon some of the most lamentable defects of humanity.

All these plays find their mainspring in evil, either personal or social, and all are colored by insistence upon this view, though tempered by a tolerance and kindness never entirely absent from Shakespeare's dramas. They cover the period that saw the death of the great Virgin Queen, the accession of James I., and a visitation of the plague in London, causing over 30,000 deaths. The theatres were closed for a time for fear of spreading infection, and the actors went upon tours in the provinces. The persecution of witches was revived, and there was also a spirit of unrest abroad because of James's expressed intention to "harry the Puritans out of England."

But, except for the exclusion from Lon-

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don, the theatrical profession found little reason to complain. Prices for plays and performances were rising, and actors received royal countenance. Shakespeare's company became "The King's Servants" and were licensed to play not only at the Globe, but everywhere in England without molestation. Shakespeare himself seems to have been held in especial favor by Elizabeth even to the very end of her life, performing before her at Richmond in February, 1603, and then appearing before the new King's court at Wilton, in December of the same year.

Another proof of royal favor accorded to the actors was seen during the formal entry of James into London, in March, 1604, when nine of them arrayed in scarlet cloaks formed a feature of the procession. Shakespeare is said to have been one of these nine; though the modern idea of fitness might have granted to King James as a favor the right to bear the cloak of the

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great dramatist during that entry into London. The players' vogue among the courtiers continued during the year, though records of the Stratford courts indicate that Shakespeare was in the town during the summer months, for he appears as a creditor and as suing for certain sums owed for malt.

In August came the visit of a Spanish Ambassador to ratify a treaty of peace, and he was entertained at Somerset House for two weeks. The players from the Globe probably assisted, but there were other than dramatic shows, for bear-baiting, bull-baiting, rope-dancing, and feats of horsemanship are mentioned, though we have no hint what plays were presented.

Later in the same year the players were again called upon to appear before the King at Whitehall, and we are told that "Othello" and "Measure for Measure" were given in the Banqueting House at Whitehall, during November and Decem-

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ber. Certain lines in the comedy refer to James's dislike of being crowded by his subjects, it is said, and may have been written in to catch the attention and favor of the King. "Othello" proved popular, being well adapted to the talents of Richard Burbage, the tragedian, who was the first to create the character. A verse written not long after Burbage's death is quoted by Richard Cargill in an interesting article on "Shakespeare as an Actor," which appeared in Scribner's Magazine for May, 1891. The lines are these:

"Dick Burbage, that most famous man,
That actor without peer,
With this same part his course began
And kept it many a year ;
Shakespeare was fortunate, I trow,
That such an actor had ;
If we but had his equal now,
For one I should be glad."

In the same article it is suggested that Shakespeare's genius in creation found encouragement because of Burbage's skill in

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interpreting his best characters, and a list is given of the parts Burbage is known to have taken, between 1593 and 1610. He was cast as Shylock, Richard III., Prince Henry, Romeo, Henry V., Brutus, Othello, Hamlet, Lear, Macbeth, Pericles, and Coriolanus, and also took principal parts in plays by other authors. Besides all this, he was busy with the management of the Globe Theatre, and well known as an artist.

He died two years after the death of Shakespeare, who was four years his senior. Another actor who deserves notice in connection with Shakespeare's dramas is William Kempe, the comedian, originator of the parts Dogberry and Justice Shallow; and the names of Hemings and Condell will be ever remembered as the collectors of the plays brought out in the First Folio edition, though little is recorded of their acting.

So diligent has been the search through all records that might reveal information

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touching Shakespeare, that there is a great mass of detail touching upon every side of his life, if we once depart from strictly personal facts. It is one of the mysteries of past times why, having so much, we lack the most vital information; but it is a mystery applying to all save a few noted men of the time. All we can say is to assert the absence of interest in the more personal side of men who were not in public life of the more spectacular sort, that of courts and camps.

In the years 1605 and 1606 are but few events to record. Shakespeare became godfather to William Davenant, afterwards a poet and playwright who was not ashamed to encourage a vague report that he was a natural son of Shakespeare, though the only foundation for the idea was the dramatist's acquaintance with the family, and a sort of a Joe-Miller jest in regard to taking the name of God in vain in the word godfather. Further invest-

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ments in Stratford were made by buying tithes to a large amount, showing an intimate connection with the town's affairs; but we are more interested to learn that during these years Shakespeare was engaged upon the composition of "Lear," "Macbeth," and the last of his Sonnets. "King Lear" was, it is believed, first produced at White-hall on December 26, 1606; and "Macbeth," which seems to have been written with special reference to King James's reign over both England and Scotland, may also have been first presented before the court.

Within the next two or three years were added "Timon of Athens," only part of which is Shakespeare's work, another collaboration, "Pericles, Prince of Tyre," both of which plainly show traces of a weaker hand, and "Coriolanus." During this period, coaches came into general use in England; Captain John Smith was settling Jamestown, Virginia; forks were being introduced from Italy; dyeing was being

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learned from the Netherlands, and the first philosophic study of magnetism and electricity was published in England. In Shakespeare's life, we must note the marriage of his daughter Susanna to Dr. John Hall, and the burial of Edmund Shakespeare in St. Saviour's Church, Southwark (formerly "St. Mary Overyes"), in 1607; and to 1608 belongs the birth of Shakespeare's first grandchild, Elizabeth Hall, and the burial of Shakespeare's mother, Mary Arden, on September 9.

Except for various publications of his works, and the information that the Blackfriars Theatre passed from the possession of their rivals, the "Children of the Chapel" to that of Shakespeare's company, there is no certain record of the further life of the dramatist as a resident of London. We next find him residing in Stratford, at New Place, to which he seems to have removed about 1610 or 1611.

In the absence of information, there is

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room for speculation, and it is a favorite theory that Shakespeare visited the continent, especially Italy. It is urged that he was familiar with the region including Milan, Verona, Padua, Venice, and speaks of it with the intimate, direct, and personal knowledge of one who has seen the country.

The argument says, "He might have gone, and he refers mainly to this region with the 'unconscious touch that comes from personal experience'; so the presumption is that he visited Italy." Yet to support this theory we can find only such items of general knowledge as might be gathered from travelers' tales; and we know that Shakespeare knew many to whom Italy was familiar. From them he might easily learn the facts he uses — that Venice had streets, that lovers rode in gondolas, and Venetian women were beautiful; that the Doge had two votes in council; and that Venice, the Queen of the Adriatic, was

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famed for the rich costumes of its nobles.
Such are some of the items cited.

Of far greater weight is the knowledge of Venetian law shown in the trial-scene: but to require a visit to Italy, Shakespeare must be proved to know some fact not otherwise likely to come to him, for Italy was to the Englishman of the time a land of which he loved to hear; it was the home of art, poetry, and romance, the chosen theme of travelers.

CHAPTER XIV

HIS LATEST WORKS

The date of the return to Stratford must have been somewhere between 1610 and 1613, and probably was in the latter year, when Shakespeare was about fifty and had written all, or all but a few, of his plays. Professor Dowden has dated only two of them later than 1609 — “*The Tempest*” and “*Winter’s Tale*”— though it is believed that Shakespeare and Fletcher worked together upon “*Henry VIII.*” and “*Two Noble Kinsmen,*” and these are dated about 1612 and 1613.

In the absence of any proof, we may conclude that Shakespeare had finished his dramatic work when he retired to live at Strat-

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ford for the remainder of his days. Why his work ceased when he was still in the prime of life, when he had reached the height of artistic power and was enjoying his great fame and wide popularity is a question often asked. The simplest answer seems to be found in the supposition that Shakespeare was a great man, too great to find complete satisfaction in mere worldly prosperity carried beyond a pitch necessary to content his ambitions. It is impossible to believe that such a mind could review the fruits of its labors without satisfaction. He had reached supreme excellence in his career; he had done more than his age, great as it was, could appreciate — more than later ages have been able to exhaust. He had made a competence, bought himself a small estate, earned the right to pass the rest of his life at ease.

As to his motive, in returning to Stratford, there is sufficient explanation of his retirement to his native place in his enjoy-

ment of nature. To such a soul as his, life in rural England, amid the natural beauties of his Warwickshire home, would be an exquisite pleasure. Books have been written to display, rather than to prove, his knowledge of plant and animal life, his close observation and love of the life of the woods and fields; and his catholicity of mind might make him as thoroughly at home amid the country folk of Stratford as among the cosmopolitan activities of London.

It may have been inevitable for people of an earlier day to express surprise at the withdrawal of Shakespeare from active life, but in our own times we have advanced sufficiently in civilization to believe that the world genius showed his true greatness by refusing to die in harness. It is not as if he were a reformer of abuses, like Wycliffe or Luther, from whom duty to his fellows demanded every effort of which he was capable, or a statesman owing to his

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country every service he could perform; Shakespeare had done his work, he had conferred upon the world the immortal treasure of his writings, and it was his right to enjoy the rest of his days in peace.

Thus it is that we find in the chronicle of his later days no more than would appear in the life of any other country gentleman. There is the purchase of a piece of pasture land in 1610, probably in contemplation of his retirement; in 1611 a subscription paper circulated at Stratford for the repairing of highways bears Shakespeare's name on the margin instead of among those of his friends and neighbors, from which it is argued by some that he was still in London; the purchase by Shakespeare of a house in London near the Blackfriars Theatre, in 1612, is another bit of evidence tending to show that he had not yet left the city. Richard Shakespeare, the poet's brother, died in 1613; and in that year, in June, occurred the burning of the

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Globe Theatre, wherein possibly were destroyed many Shakespeare manuscripts. Since there is no mention of the dramatist in any of the accounts of the fire, it is thought he was not present. Some authorities tell us that the cause of the fire was the use of cannon in the play "Henry VIII"; that some of the wadding fell upon the thatch and could not be put out. But others deny that the play was Shakespeare's of that name, at the same time saying that it was the first drama in which the stage-effect was made the principal feature. Sir Henry Wotton has left a most amusing account of the fire, in which, as quoted by Sidney Lee, he says:

"Now, King Henry making a masque at the Cardinal Wolsey's house, and certain cannons being shot off at his entry, some of the paper or other stuff wherewith one of them was stopped did light on the thatch; where, being thought at first but an idle smoke, and their eyes more attentive to the

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show, it kindled inwardly, and ran round like a train, consuming within less than an hour the whole house to the very grounds. This was the fatal period of that virtuous fabric, wherein yet nothing did perish but wood and straw and a few forsaken cloaks; only one man had his breeches set on fire that would perhaps have broiled him, if he had not by the benefit of a provident wit, put it out with bottle ale."

Besides this prose account, there is an amusing poem on the occurrence.

It is noticeable that Wotton asserts there was nothing valuable destroyed — which he would hardly have said if the stock of plays had been consumed.

The Globe Theatre was rebuilt the next year, but the new building could never, of course, possess the historical interest of its predecessor. The old Globe had been the birthplace of many of Shakespeare's greatest plays, and in the last few years before his retirement had appeared those great

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tragedies that mark the culmination of dramatic art — for in recent years the best criticism has ceased to place above them even the masterpieces of Greek Tragedy, finding in Shakespeare the same elevation and a greater breadth and deeper insight.

There can be no adequate study of these mighty tragedies in a brief space. Continued contemplation of them brings to light new merits and new beauties, discovers new depths. But their very greatness admits of regarding them simply, just as the best architecture excels when it is viewed from afar as well as when considered minutely.

We may therefore trust that we may in some measure appreciate the greatness of “Julius Cæsar,” “Hamlet,” “Othello,” “Lear,” and “Macbeth,” though we seek no more than a simple opening of the mind to their influence, attempting no close analysis of the features that give us a sense of their grandeur.

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“Julius Cæsar” is rather the tragedy of Brutus than of his victim, for although the greatest of the Romans is brought before us with imperial power, it is the power of his past that dominates the play with an influence outlasting himself. Brutus is a man ruled by his ideals, and the tragedy of his failure is due to the fact that these ideals are out of tune with the world around him; he is noble, good, unselfish, but he is not subtle. Cassius, knowing the foibles of Brutus, can make the good man an instrument of evil. As Cassius says:

“Thy honorable metal may be wrought
From that it is disposed: Therefore it is meet
That noble minds keep ever with their likes.”

Rome, corrupt and unsound, was kept together only by the power of Cæsar. Brutus, in condemning Cæsar, destroys the only power capable of controlling the elements of discord, thus ruining the very cause he has at heart, and falling in the

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general destruction, self-slain as much by his character as by his sword.

There may be minor defects visible to scholars in Shakespeare's picture of Rome and the Romans, but he has made us live in the grand old Roman days as no antiquarian or historian could ever perform that miracle of recreation. For his facts he was indebted to North's translation of "Plutarch's Lives," but he read the text with an insight and used its contents with a genius no other could compass. He got at the real men through Plutarch, and made them alive again in his dramas, for to the same source he owes "Antony and Cleopatra," parts of "Timon," and "Coriolanus," and no other author brought to Shakespeare material so nearly ready to his hand.

Charles Hutson in a recent poem in the Century Magazine well sums up the effect of reading this storehouse of classical biography:

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Is it my Plutarch that the boy holds there
Upon his knee, his soul absorbed in deeds
Of other races, lands, and times, and creeds,
The soft Ægean breeze within his hair,
And tales of heroes for his daily fare ?
Ah ! let him burn to face the haughty Medes,
And glory in the men that Athens breeds,
Or thrill at all the odds that Romans dare !
E'en thus it was that Shakespeare learned to know
His Timon and his Serpent of old Nile,
And thus Montaigne in wisdom learned to grow,
And thus the Corsican who left his isle
To rule a world got thews that world to throw :
My boy may get him something worth his while.

But for the tragedy of "Hamlet" the original source of the story is of least importance. As in "Julius Cæsar" we see Brutus overcome by the terrible power of realities opposed to idealities, so in "Hamlet" we see the acquired refinement of a sensitive soul striving against inborn impulses, and at last overcome by them. Naturally reflective, philosophic, kindly, Hamlet would be content to live as an observer and to let the world go by. Then comes the imperative summons to action,

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repeated, insistent, and at last irresistible. A recent essayist has found in the character an embodiment of the Christian spirit in conflict with that of paganism. But that is a mere matter of names — we may see in the prince whatever invites the human soul to shirk the practical duties of life, living in the kingdom of the mind, observing and reflecting instead of acting.

Many honest-minded readers are repelled by critical writing that finds deep meanings in works that seem simple and direct of purpose. They turn away from the speculations about the play of "Hamlet," saying to themselves, "There can not be so much underlying the words of the play. Shakespeare never meant more than he said. The plot is plain enough, why should Hamlet be taken to signify anything more than appears on the surface?"

The answer is to appeal to the very common sense upon which these readers pride themselves. If Hamlet was no more than

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the unfortunate scion of a remote and long-past royal house,— what would he be to us more than Hecuba was to him? We should read the play with as little emotion as we read the old annals of some Oriental court where the sack and bowstring are humdrum events, and tragedies no more regarded than the summer cloud. But we can not so regard him. He does not so regard himself. Every speech of the young prince goes to the heart because he is all informed with sympathy for mankind, and bewails his own sufferings only as they are the sufferings of all mankind. We feel with him because he feels with us. His problem is that of every human soul — whether to be passive or active in the presence of evil doing. On this hangs all the law and the prophets.

So we may generalize the opinions of the commentators, though one sees, in the forces opposed, Paganism against Christianity; another, righteousness against sin;

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another, forgiveness against revenge, or the human against the bestial, and so on endlessly. Theories and speculations concerning the problems in "Hamlet" form a literature by themselves.

Of course Shakespeare throws abstractions into concrete forms, making the apparition the mouthpiece of internal promptings and making the counsels of human prudence come from the mouths of the personages of the play. But the real significant and essential motives of the drama all proceed from the soul of Hamlet, and within him lies the substance of the tragedy, all outward happenings being but interpretations and results of his mental states.

Were this not so, Hamlet's speculative speeches would be of least interest, his doings of greatest; but the opposite is true. Indeed, the interpretation of the whole play depends largely upon our reading of these soliloquies. Thus in "To be, or not to be," what shall we make of the lines

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“For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil
Must give us pause: There’s the respect
That makes calamity of so long life.
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time

• • • • •

When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin ?”

It has been ably argued by William Burnet Wright (in the Atlantic Monthly) that all this argument does not refer to suicide — as usually thought — but to the inflicting of death upon the wrongdoer. He claims that the lines mean “Fear of future judgment keeps us from avenging ourselves with the dagger.” Hamlet, he says, had previously rejected the idea of suicide on the ground that it was against the “canon of the Eternal,” and was now considering his course toward the king,— the taking of arms “against a sea of troubles” to oppose them, not to slay himself.

It would be pleasant if we could comfort ourselves with the thought that Shakespeare

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meant no more than is evident upon a cursory reading, but that is impossible. He is unintelligible except when studied deeply, though the main currents of his purpose are ever obvious and powerful. With these great movements of his thought we may, if we choose, rest content; but the exquisite delicacy of his art, the marvelous grace and beauty of his workmanship can be known only to the patient student who will give his days and his nights to these inexhaustible treasures of our literature. So far as it lieth in man, Shakespeare's work is like nature's own — it eternally rewards study with new excellencies.

Ruskin says, "Shakespeare, painting honestly and completely from the men about him, painted that human nature which is, indeed, constant enough — a rogue in the fifteenth century being, at heart, what a rogue is in the nineteenth and was in the twelfth; and an honest or a knightly man being, in like manner, very

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similar to other such at any other time. And the work of these great idealists is, therefore, always universal; not because it is *not portrait*, but because it is *complete* portrait down to the heart, which is the same in all ages."

Horatio and Laertes are drawn to contrast with Hamlet, and none of the other characters is strong enough to interfere with the dominating figure that is so weak in its greatness.

As one re-reads the inspired lines to make sure of one's impressions, it is impossible to withhold the mind from the spell of the tragedy. To analyze it seems heartless; as if one should moralize over the death of a beloved friend. We can say only that it is supremely great.

So with "Othello," that pitiful tragedy of hearts broken by villainy, with "King Lear," the tragedy of trust betrayed; the appeal to the sympathies is so strong that the critical faculties are set aside. The

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power and excellence of the plays are shown by their effect upon ourselves, and in their immediate presence criticism is abashed as was the slave who dared not slay Marius in prison.

For the personality of Macbeth we have not the same feeling. He is an evil-doer from motives that do not palliate his crimes. He is without claim to clemency, and yet wins a certain respect by his very hardihood. Once entered upon the downward path, he goes dauntlessly on, though every reliance fails him, and when finally he stands with his back to the abyss he stakes all upon the last throw:

“ Yet will I try the last :—before my body
I throw my warlike shield. Lay on, Macduff,
And damned be him that first cries *Hold, enough.*”

This is the spirit of the English race in defeat, the spirit that has won praise even from the savage races, who fear death no more than do the English themselves; and

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indeed it is unfair to call it English, for it belongs to the best races of man everywhere and even to some animals. It is the spirit of desperation that says to the world, "I am stronger to endure than are you to inflict." To put the matter plainly, there is in Macbeth the soul that "dies game," and this wins our sympathy despite our better judgment.

Perhaps the most marvelous quality in the Shakespeare tragedies is their unity in their diversity. In reading any one of them we feel it could have come from no other brain. In comparing them we find each unlike any other in treatment. We cannot conceive the limits of the soul that expresses itself with equal power through the grandeur of "Julius Cæsar," the pathos of "Lear," the subtlety of "Hamlet," the force of "Macbeth" — to say nothing of any others. "All mankind's epitome" — the words cannot be bettered.

And then comes the calm of evening, the

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serenity of that strangely named play, "The Tempest," the romance of "Cymbeline," the beauty of the "Winter's Tale," to end fittingly a career that seems best typified by the sun in its course from faintest dawn through midday glory to the superb sunset. We who speak his mother tongue have reason to be thankful that we know him directly and may receive his own thought in his own words.

CHAPTER XV

HIS CLOSING YEARS AND DEATH

After the turmoil of the tragedies there is restfulness in the last group of plays, which Professor Dowden styles "Romances"—"Pericles" (only in part his), "Cymbeline," "Tempest," and "Winter's Tale." Of these he says that their spirit is "that of serenity which results from fortitude, and the recognition of human frailty." They represent his farewell to the stage and to the world.

They have the breath of outdoors, as if the writer were in imagination already among the scenes of his boyhood, and they are as irresponsible as fairy tales, but fairy tales told by the wisest of men. Prospero in his island home has been so often com-

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pared with Shakespeare in his later days that there is no need to suggest the parallel again. Imogen, Miranda, and Perdita are three graces fit to be with Portia, Rosalind, Cordelia, Juliet and their sisters of the earlier plays.

Like a hurried tourist passing through a gallery crowded with masterpieces, we have merely glanced at these creations each of which might richly reward a lifetime of study; but we have at least reminded ourselves that they exist available for endless delight and enrichment of spirit. Shakespeare's works are a world ever open to us if we but learn the way thither; and he who denies himself entrance to the enchanted realm, has disinherited himself of the greatest treasure of intellectual wealth. Read the Bible and Shakespeare, and the rest of your library will take care of itself.

But we must no longer be tempted to remain among the creations of the poet's fancy. He himself had left these children

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to the future, and was in his home in Stratford. Richard Grant White believes that he had returned from London "a disappointed man," and in Stratford found no consolation. His only son was dead, and "his daughters, rustic born and rustic bred," were married late in life to simple village folk. Rowe, the poet's first biographer, says that "his pleasurable wit and good-nature engaged him in the acquaintance and entitled him to the friendship of the gentlemen of the neighborhood"—which reminds one how Shakespeare was honored by being permitted to march into London with King James!

But it is folly to record these absurd traditions whose very nature is a proof that we know nothing of the man after his pen ceased to interpret him to us. During these last few years in Stratford we can name a few happenings. We know that there was a fire which destroyed more than fifty of the frame houses, and undoubtedly left

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the town by so much the more savory. We know that there was an attempt to deprive the town of certain common-fields, the inclosing of which would have reduced the tithes, and that Shakespeare, as a tithes-owner, was consulted on the subject and showed a business-man's wish to be protected from loss; we know that a preacher was entertained at New Place, and that the wine for his entertainment was a town charge, according to custom. But these facts touch Shakespeare no more than they relate to any citizen of Stratford. The conclusion is inevitable that there was no consciousness among Shakespeare's contemporaries of the nature of man he was. Immortality and the gratitude of all succeeding times were the rewards waiting for any Londoner or townsman of Stratford who had a little of the insight of Boswell — who had enough keenness of vision to see that this man was one future ages would reverence.

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As Emerson has declared, "Since the constellation of great men who appeared in Greece in the time of Pericles, there was never any such society; yet their genius failed them to find out the best head in the universe." It is not true that the merit of the plays was not in some degree admitted, but they are ranked as if equal with works immeasurably inferior. To quote Emerson's essay again, "Shakespeare is as much out of the category of authors as he is out of the crowd. He is inconceivably wise; the others conceivably. . . . He is wise without emphasis or assertion; he is strong as nature is strong, who lifts the land into mountain slopes without effort and by the same rule as she floats a bubble in the air, and likes as well to do the one as the other."

It is this supremacy no man suspected in his time or for generations afterward. Ben Jonson irritates us by his cool remaining "this side of idolatry," little realizing

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that if he had passed over to the idolatry side he would only have proved his own greatness. Milton's reference to "native wood-notes wild" is to-day excused by the supposition that Milton's reading of Shakespeare was limited or his mind classically blinded. Addison and Dr. Johnson have barely escaped the fool's cap in their presumptuous posing as critics of this man's works, and Samuel Pepys has not escaped, but has pilloried himself securely by his fatuous references to the immortal plays. How could these and a hundred others even read "Lear," "Hamlet," and "Macbeth" without knowing themselves in the presence of a demigod?

But instead of the facts we should like to know, we have only records of the marriage of Judith Shakespeare to Thomas Quiney, four years her senior, of the execution of the poet's will on March 25, 1616, and of his death April 23, in the same year. The diary of John Ward, Vicar of Stratford,

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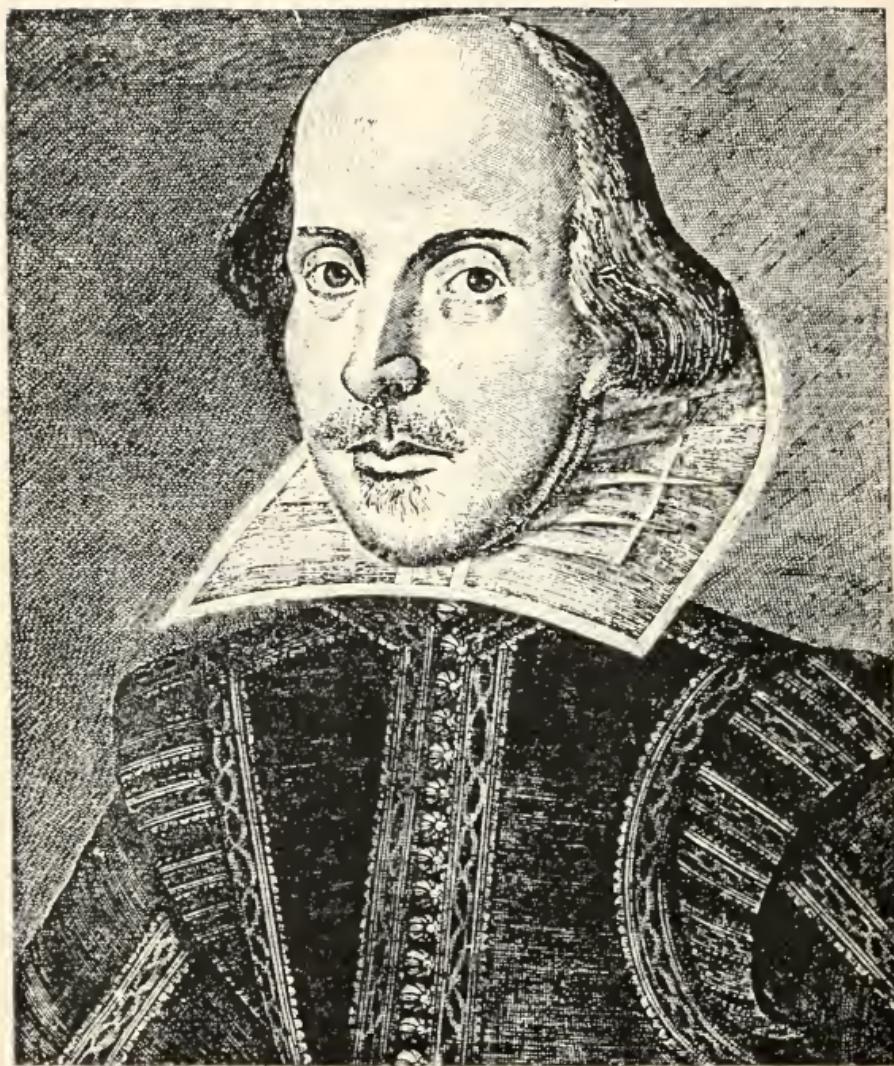
has this story: “Shakespeare, Drayton, and Ben Jonson had a merry meeting, and it seems, drank too hard, for Shakespeare died of a fever there contracted.” This diary was written between 1661 and 1663, forty-five years and more after the event, and so seems entitled to little credence, though it has been by many accepted.

Nothing remains to tell save the date of the funeral, April 25, and the fact of his burial in Trinity Church, Stratford, under the stone bearing the doggerel lines cursing any disturber of his bones — lines into which there have been various attempts to read something beyond fear of the charnel house.

Anne Hathaway outlived him seven years, and in the register of her burial is this entry:

8 { Mrs. Shakespeare.
 { Anna uxor Richardi James.

the figure is the day of the month, August,
260



Martin Droeshout sculpsit London

W. H. & W. S. Shakespeare

(FROM THE FIRST FOLIO ENGRAVING BY MARTIN DROESHOUT)

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and the bracket suggests that the widow of Shakespeare may have become the wife of a Richard James, of whom the records say nothing further, so far as I know, unless he were the author of that poetical tribute to Shakespeare, in the 1632 Folio, signed I. M. S. The genealogical table given earlier in this volume shows that no descendant of the poet long survived him, the only representatives of the family being the Harts, descendants from his sister Joan.

In 1623 appeared the first collected edition of the plays, that known as the First Folio, to which was prefixed the ugly portrait engraved by Droeshout, probably from a painting that is now at Stratford. Though this engraving was praised (after the fashion of dedicatory verses) a glance at it is enough to prove that it cannot be a very striking likeness of anybody. The bust on the tomb at Stratford may once have been a good portrait, but having been restored, re-colored, and possibly broken

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and mended, it has lost all claims to our faith.

In fact, there is no picture or statue upon which we can entirely pin our own faith beyond certain general resemblances. One can be traced back to Shakespeare's godson, Davenant, another to some other relative, acquaintance or friend; but none exists that proves itself, as, for example, a portrait of Bismarck, Washington, Gladstone, Napoleon, proves itself. These were extraordinary men, and their faces are the warrant of their greatness. So with Voltaire, Frederick the Great, Chaucer. These men bear countenances that show the moulding of the soul within. The existing portraits of Shakespeare that claim any authenticity are apparently less true than the ideal likenesses — those conceived by Gower, by MacMonnies, by Ward; and yet these, too, leave us unsatisfied. We refuse to recognize in them the man of the dramas and the poems.

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The same dissatisfaction remains after reviewing the records of the poet's life, the same sense of something lacking to the reality of representation, the same feeling that the Shakespeare created from the imagination of writers is truer to life than the figure put together out of shreds and patches of fact. To know Shakespeare one must first become acquainted with the spirit of the plays — an Elizabethan spirit, always, even when it masquerades in the forms of ancient Rome or legendary Britain, of Italy or Fairyland. Then listen to the words of Carlyle, of Emerson, of Lowell, of Coleridge, of Schlegel, and of Goethe, taking from each such help as each brings.

When we have some conception of the poet Shakespeare, we may without fear enter upon the study of the dry chronicles of facts, knowing that there can be no fact strong enough to destroy the greater evidence of the writings themselves in demon-

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strating their author's greatness. Whatever is inconsistent with them must at last perish, whatever is consistent with them will eventually take its place in the enduring immortality of the man Shakespeare.

After Shakespeare's death there flourished a school of dramatists who were under the influence of Ben Jonson, nine years Shakespeare's junior, who from being a bricklayer, became soldier, actor and dramatist. After Shakespeare's withdrawal from the scene Jonson's rapid rise made him Poet Laureate; but he is said to have died in poverty, leaving a body of works only surpassed by him who surpassed all. Beaumont and Fletcher, Philip Massinger, John Ford, and John Webster are mentioned only to show the greatness of the playwrights who composed the Elizabethan dramas of the second rank, and made up the "greatest outburst of genius the world has ever seen," and whose brilliance is obscured only because they are so near the

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greater luminary on whom all men's eyes are fixed.

That their influence came to an end is due of course to the great Puritan movement that gathered force soon after the death of Shakespeare and soon swept away every trace of the Elizabethan stage, until in 1642 the theatres were closed, not to reopen for seventeen years. When the drama was revived, French taste was dominant, and Shakespeare's plays were adapted to suit the false standards of the time. Dowden gives a long list of these revisions, to characterize which it is only necessary to give a specimen by noting that Nicholas Tate "improved 'King Lear' by introducing love-passages between Edwin and Cordelia, and by giving the play a happy ending."

With the beginning of the eighteenth century came more admiration for Shakespeare, and the first critical editions of the plays, and by the middle of the century the

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appreciation of the dramatist had risen so that it needed only the acting of Garrick to turn interest to fervent admiration. Then began the eager study of Shakespeare that has known no abatement to our own day. The names of Lamb, Hazlitt, Coleridge lead the endless list in which the American scholars Hudson, White, and Furness hold honorable rank. The sway of the poet is now world-wide, and not only the dramatist or his collected works, but each play threatens to give rise to a literature. There is danger that the excessive idolatry of his admirers may so deify him as to withdraw him from the hearts of his readers.

For after all is said, Shakespeare needs neither priesthood nor interpreters. Richard Grant White says truly, "Almost all of us must have something of Shakespeare latent in our souls, voiceless and unexpressed; else we should be incapable of that sympathetic comprehension of his thoughts

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and his characters, the existence of which among ever increasing multitudes for many generations is the only possible condition of his peculiar and enduring fame;" and in another place, "To each new reader Shakespeare brings more than one life can exhaust, and those who have studied him longest are they who are best assured that no man ever laid his head so close upon the great heart of Nature, and heard so clearly the throb of her deep pulses."

Almost without exception the poets have sought to embody in verse their love and veneration for the greatest of their race; but few have said more in little space than Leigh Hunt in the words:

" Humanity's divinest son,
That sprightliest, gravest, wisest, kindest one."

Such must the author of the plays have been.

Nothing can better exemplify Marlowe's wonderful line than the volume containing

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in small compass Shakespeare's Plays, for
here if anywhere on earth may we grasp

“Infinite riches in a little room.”

By the common consent of mankind we have in these plays the highest achievement of humanity, that wherein man has come nearest to the miracle of creation.

FINIS.

APPENDIX

CHIEF DATES RELATING TO SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE AND WORKS

DATE	SHAKESPEARE	OTHER EVENTS	LITERARY WORKS
1557	John Shakespeare marries Mary Arden.		
1558	Anne Hathaway born.	Accession of Queen Elizabeth, 1558.	
1564	William Shakespeare born. Plague in Stratford.	First English tragedy played, 1561. Birth of Galileo; death of Calvin.	
1565	John Shakespeare an alderman.	Death of Michel Angelo, 1564. Manila islands ceded by Portugal to Spain, and named Philippines, 1564.	
1566	Birth of Gilbert Shakespeare.	Birth of King James, death of Rizzio, 1566; of Darnley, 1567. French expelled from Florida by Spain. Rugby founded, 1567.	
1568	John Shakespeare a bailiff.	Death of Roger Ascham.	
1569	Birth of Joan Shakespeare.	Actors entertained at Stratford. Death of Benvenuto Cellini, 1570.	
1571	William enters school. Anne Shakespeare born.	Battle of Lepanto, 1571. Harrow founded, 1571.	

Appendix

DATE	SHAKESPEARE	OTHER EVENTS	LITERARY WORKS
1572	J o h n Shakespeare chief alderman.	Massacre of St. Bartholomew, 1572. Death of John Knox, 1572. License for theatre to Burbage, 1574.	"Lusiad" of Camoens.
1575	Queen Elizabeth at Kenilworth.	Plague at Venice, 1576; death of Titian at the age of 99.	"Jerusalem Delivered," Tasso.
1577	William Shakespeare leaves school. John Shakespeare in financial straits.	Drake's voyage begins. Birth of Rubens.	
1578	Ashbies estate mortgaged.	First colony in Virginia. Drake explores California.	
1579		Plays forbidden in London.	
1580	Birth of Edmund Shakespeare.	Death of Sir Nicholas Bacon. Tycho Brahe and Kepler's tables of astronomical observations.	Essays of Montaigne.
1581	Players twice at Stratford.	Portugal annexed to Spain.	
1582	Shakespeare marries Anne Hathaway.	Water supply arranged for London. Death of Holinshed.	
1583	Birth of Susanna Shakespeare.	Ten days added to calendar, making Oct. 5 Oct. 15; birth of elder Teniers; birth of Grotius.	
1585	Birth of Hamnet and Judith Shakespeare. Poaching episode.	Birth of Myles Standish, 1584. Raleigh goes to Virginia. Birth of John Pym and Selden; Harrow founded; birth of Richelieu.	
1586	Shakespeare goes to London between 1585 and 1587.	Japanese send ambassadors to Rome. Davis's explorations. Death of Sir Philip Sidney, 1586.	

Appendix

DATE	SHAKESPEARE	OTHER EVENTS	LITERARY WORKS
1586	John Shakespeare loses his place in the council.	Theatres closed because of plague. Death of Mary, Queen of Scots. Birth of Vondel, author of "Lucifer." Five companies of actors at Stratford, 1587.	
1588		The Great Armada defeated. Death of Paul Veronese.	First English newspaper.
1589		Birth of John Hobbes. Henry of Navarre, King of France.	Greene's "Mena-phon."
1590		Lee invents stocking loom. Battle of Ivry.	Lope de Vega dramas.
1591	Sir Richard Grenville's "Revenge" fights the Spanish fleet. Founding of Trinity College, Dublin.		Titus Andronicus, 1588-1590. "Love's Labor's Lost," 1590. I "Henry VI," 1591. Stow, the Antiquarian. "Comedy of Errors," 1591. II and III "Henry VI," 1591.
1592	John Shakespeare reported as not attending church services.	Rialto and Palace of St. Mark, Venice. Death of Montaigne.	"Two Gentlemen of Verona," 1592-3.
1593	Rose theater opened. Shakespeare writing regularly for the stage.	Death of Robert Greene. Death of Marlowe. Plague in London; 28,000 deaths.	"Richard III," "Venus and Adonis," 1593. "Midsummer Night's Dream," 1593-4.
1594	Shakespeare performs at Greenwich palace before Elizabeth.	Bank of England incorporated.	"Richard II," 1594

Appendix

DATE	SHAKESPEARE	OTHER EVENTS	LITERARY WORKS
1594	"Comedy of Errors" at Gray's Inn.	Birth of John Hampden.	"Lucrece," 1594.
1595		Death of Tasso; Dutch East India Co. founded.	"King John," 1595. First of sonnets.
1596	Death of Hamnet Shakespeare. John Shakespeare applies for coat-of-arms.	Raleigh goes to Guiana. Birth of Descartes.	"Merchant of Venice," 1596. "Romeo and Juliet," 1596-7.
1597	Shakespeare buys New Place.	Plague causes 17,890 deaths; use of tomato, sweet potato, egg plant.	"Taming of the Shrew," 1597.
1598	Globe Theatre built. Shakespeare's name first appears on a play, "Love's Labor's Lost." Shakespeare acts in "Every man in His Humor." Quiney letter written to Shakespeare.	Edict of Nantes. Bodleian Library founded. Death of Edmund Spenser, aged 45. First coach in Scotland. Essex disgraced.	I and II "Hen. IV," 1597-8. "Meres' Palladis Tamia" published. "Merry Wives of Windsor," 1598. "Much Ado About Nothing," 1598. "Passionate Pilgrim," 1598.
1599	Shakespeare may have visited Scotland.	Birth of Cromwell, Vandyck, Blake.	"Henry V.," 1599. "As You Like It," 1599.
1600	Shakespeare recovers £7 from John Clayton.	Gilbert's researches on magnetism. Bacon distinguished in Essex trial. East India Co. founded. Birth of Claude Lorraine.	"Twelfth Night," 1600-1.
1601	Death of John Shakespeare.	Essex rebellion foisted. Essex and Southampton condemned.	"Julius Cæsar," 1601.

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DATE	SHAKESPEARE	OTHER EVENTS	LITERARY WORKS
1602	Shakespeare buys land in Stratford.	Introduction of cauliflower and asparagus.	"All's Well," 1601. "Hamlet," 1602.
1603	Shakespeare and his company before the Queen at Richmond. King James comes to London.	Death of Elizabeth. Plague in London, 30,000 deaths. New translation of Bible ordered.	"Measure for Measure," 1603. "Troilus and Cressida," 1603. Florio's "Montaigne." "Othello," 1604.
1604	March 15, 1604, Shakespeare in the formal entry of King James. Shakespeare lends money in Stratford and sues for it.	Laws against witchcraft. Scenery at Oxford painted by Inigo Jones; silk weaving encouraged in England.	
1605	Augustine Phillips bequeaths 30 shillings to Shakespeare. Shakespeare buys Stratford tithes.	Coaches in general use. Davenant baptized.	"Lear," 1605. Last of Sonnets, 1605.
1606		Act against profanity in plays.	"Macbeth," 1606.
1607	Marriage of Susanna Shakespeare.	Jamestown founded in Virginia.	"Anthony and Cleopatra," 1607.
1608	Elizabeth Hall, Shakespeare's grandchild, baptized. Mary Arden dies. Shakespeare godfather to William Walker.	Aldgate rebuilt. Forks introduced from Italy. Compass-box invented.	"Timon of Athens," 1607-8. "Coriolanus," 1608. "Pericles," 1608.
1609	Shakespeare's company takes Blackfriar's Theatre.	Mulberry trees planted, silk-worms imported. Four months' frost in London. Copper coinage begun.	"Cymbeline," 1609.
1610	Shakespeare buys 20 acres at Stratford.	Thermometer in use.	"Tempest," 1610.
1611		Authorized version of the Bible.	"Winter's Tale," 1611.
1613	Richard Shakespeare buried. Shakespeare buys a house in Blackfriars. Burning of Globe Theatre.	Birth of Jeremy Taylor. Birth of La Rochefoucauld.	"Two Noble Kinsmen," 1612-3. "Henry VIII.," 1613.

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DATE	SHAKESPEARE	OTHER EVENTS	LITERARY WORKS
1614	John Combe leaves Shakespeare a legacy. The question of enclosing commons arises.	Moorfields, London, leveled and paved.	
1616	Judith Shakespeare married. Death of Shakespeare, April 23, aged 52	Death of Cervantes, April 13th. Baffin's Bay discovered.	

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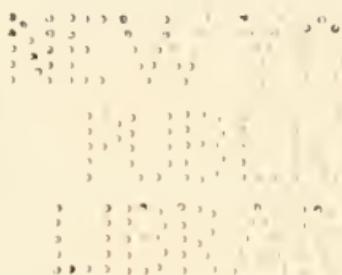
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